

Chakras and Naadis in the Body

As envisioned in the Upanishads

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Chakras & Naadis in the Body

The various chakras of the body symbolise the subtle energy centers or circles located in various parts of the body.

(A) The Chakras, as the name suggests, are the subtle ‘whirling wheels of stupendous divine energy’ in the body. The Chakras are located along the spinal cord from its base to the top of the head. These Chakras manage the body’s energy system. They receive, assimilate and distribute the energy throughout the body and the spinal nerve system.

Malfunctioning Chakras have a negative impact on the body; they restrict or block the movement of vital energies and winds inside the body. The different ways to keep these Chakras in fine-tuned condition are—meditation, Yoga exercises, various postures, chanting of Mantras etc. The properly functioning Chakras keep the endocrine glands functioning properly so that the hormones can regulate the proper functioning of the body. The immune system of the body is activated, diseases are naturally fought and detoxification process speeded up in the body. A sketch depicting the Chakras is appended to this appendix.

(A) (1) Location and shape of the Chakras :- (i) ‘Bhug’ is triangular in shape and represents the female genital organ.

(ii) The ‘Kanda’ (literally meaning the root like structure, a tuber root, e.g. radish) is located 12" above the opening of the anus, has a diameter of 4", is cylindrical in shape, about twelve finger-widths long and covered by a jelly-like soft membrane.

(iii) The ‘Mooladhar Chakra’ represents the earth element, and its Beej (i.e. the root syllable) is the Sanskrit letter Lam (ल). It is located between the genitals and the anus in the area called the pelvic plexus or the perineum. It is the site of the symbolic Shiva Lingam (Yogshikha Upanishad, Canto 1, verse no. 168) and the route through which the Apaana wind finds its entrance in the Kundalini (Yogshikha Upanishad, Canto 2, verse no. 13). It is also here that the ascetic hears the Naad. It is said to be a symbol of Shakti or the dynamic powers of Shiva principle (Yogshikha Upanishad, Canto 2, verse no. 8, 11-12 and Canto 3, verse no. 2).

(iv) The ‘Swadhisthan Chakra’ is located above the groins of males and the Bhug area of females. It has a symbolic 5-headed male phallus like a sprouting seed, and its counterpart in the female is the clitoris—it is called Hypogastric plexus. It forms the base of the genitals. It represents the water element, and its Beej (i.e. the root syllable) is the Sanskrit letter Vam (व).

The Chakras 1-4 are related to the sexual reproduction cycle marking the creation of the world. Hence are called ‘Kaam’ (lust, passion, desire), and are associated

with the fire element.

(v) The 'Kundalini' is located at the base of the spine between the navel and Swadhisthan Chakra in the upper part of the Moolkand, and it is coil shaped having three and a half loops. Its one end blocks the entrance to the Sushumna nerve (Naadi) rising from the base of the spine and going right up to the head. Therefore, we conclude that Kundalini lies dormant at the base of the spine.

(vi) The 'Manipur Chakra' is located in the navel area, is shaped like a gem and is surrounded by the network of Naadis (nerves) called the solar plexus. It is also the site of the symbolic solar energy in the body as it is located in a region where the Sun is said to present in a symmolic manner in the body, i.e. in the region between the navel and heart. It represents the fire element, and its Beej (i.e. the root syllable) is Ram or Rung (pronounced as in Rum or Rung--(ॠ)).

(vii) The 'Anahat Chakra' is located in the chest around the heart area and it is shaped like a swan looking downwards. It is also assumed to be like a 8-petal lotus facing down. It is also called the Hridaya Chakra or the cardiac plexus. It represents the air/wind element, and its Beej (i.e. the root syllable) is the Sanskrit letter Yam (ॠ).

(viii) The 'Vishuddha Chakra/Kanth Chakra' is located in the pit of the throat. To the left of it passes the Eda nerve representing the moon, to its right goes the Pingla nerve representing the sun, and in the center is the Sushumna nerve through which the Kundalini energy rises up from the base of the spine to the skull. It is called pharynecal plexus. It represents the sky (ether) element, and its Beej (i.e. the root syllable) is the Sanskrit letter Ham (ॡ).

(ix) The 'Talu Chakra' also called Raajdant as well as Ghantikaa. It is the route which leads to the so-called the 10th door of Brahm which is the Brahm Randhra at the top of the head. The word 'Talu' means the roof of the mouth cavity, the palate. Hence, the 'Talu Chakra' is located at the rear end of the palate at the back of the mouth cavity and near the base of the tongue. This site is where the cavity of the mouth opens into the wind pipe linking the lungs and the nostrils.

(x) The 'Agya Charka or Bhru Chakra' is located between the eyebrows and root of the nose. It is also called the third eye of enlightenment and wisdom. It represents the Mahat (that which transcends the elements) and its Beej (i.e. its root syllable) is the Sanskrit monosyllabic word OM.

(xi) The 'Brahm Randhra Chakra or Sahasraar Charka' is located in the head below the cranium and has the form of a 1000-petal lotus. It has the form of a grey cloud or smoke. It is near the hair-like spilt in the top of the skull from where the vital wind called 'Pran' makes its exit from the body of a Yogi (ascetic) at the time of his death.

(xii) The 'Vyom Chakra' is symbolic of the sky and it is shaped like a 10-petal lotus located at the top of the head below the skull.

(A) (2) Influence of Chakras on the personality of a man—The seven main Chakras determine the general temperament, outlook, nature, demeanors and overall personality of a man. The chief traits or positive virtues that are influenced by these seven Chakras are listed below:- (i) Muladhar Charka relates to the virtue of innocence.

(ii) Swadhisthan Chakra relates to creativity.

(iii) Nabhi Chakra has an influence on peace.

(iv) Heart Chakra controls such emotions as love and compassion.

(v) Kantha Chakra helps generate collectivity because it is through the throat that a man can call out to someone and collect and address a crowd.

(vi) Bhru Chakra is the center of wisdom, and hence controls forgiveness, fortitude and tolerance.

(vii) Brahm Randhra Charka deals with intellect and mind since it is located at the top of the head. Hence, it controls integration and coordination.

(A) (3) The colours of the Chakras—(i) The Mooladhar Chakra has the Red colour.

(ii) The 'Swadhisthan Chakra' has the Orange colour.

(iii) The 'Manipur Chakra' has the Yellow colour. (A combination of Red and Green)

(iv) The 'Anahat Chakra' has the Green colour.

(v) The 'Vishuddha Chakra or Kantha Chakra' and the 'Taluka Chakra' both have the Blue colour with the hue of smoke-grey (dull or light shade of blue).

(vi) The 'Bhru Chakra or Agya Chakra' has the Indigo colour which adds a bluish tinge to the cloudy suble space of the head.

(vii) The 'Brahm Randhra Chakra' has light Blue colour.

(viii) The 'Sasaraar or Vyom Chakra' has the Violet colour and has the form of a grey cloud or smoke.

Now let us examine some of the Upanishads and what they have to say on these Chakras.

The names of the six main Chakras and their location are clearly mentioned in *Yog Kundalini Upanishad*, Canto 3, verse nos. 9-11 of the Krishna Yajur Veda tradition. To quote—

“Verse no. 9-11 = The spiritual aspirant should learn about the six Chakras of the body¹ and then find rest (i.e. fix his attention and the energy of the Pran and consciousness) in the Chakra which gives him extreme sense of bliss and ecstasy (i.e. the Sahasraar Chakra).

The six Chakras are the following—Mooladhar, Swadhisthan, Manipur, Anaahat, Vishudha and Agya [9 ½].

The Mooladhar is situated near the anus, the Swadhisthan near the genital, the Manipur in the area around the navel, the Anaahat in the heart region, the Vishudha in the pit of the throat, and the Agya in the forehead [11]. (9-11)”.

The *Yogshikha Upanishad*, Canto 1, verse no. 168 of Krishna Yajur Veda describes this Mooladhar Chakra and the Kanda situated on it as the Shiva's Lingam. This same Upanishad describes the other Chakras as well, and introduces them at two levels—(a) one at the micro level of the individual creature's body (Canto 1, verse nos. 169-175), and (b) the other at the macro level of creation (Canto 1, verse nos. 176-178).

Now let us see what it has to say on this subject:—

(a) The Chakras at the micro level of the individual creature's body (*Yogshikha Upanishad*, Canto 1, verse nos. 168-175)—

“Verse no. 168 = In fact, this human body is the medium by which one can obtain all spiritual successes and get emancipation and salvation for their souls as well as liberation and deliverance from this world, i.e. find Moksha and Mukti respectively. Since this body provides all these spiritual facilities to an aspirant, it is likened to a temple of Lord Shiva. [This is because a man goes to a temple to worship its deity to obtain the latter's blessings for one's wish fulfillment and seek divine intervention for all his worldly problems. But a worldly temple does not provide the same spiritual experience that one gets if he treats his own body as the temple of Shiva. In the latter case, the experience becomes very personal and unforgettable, and therefore requires no further proof of its veracity and truthfulness. Which temple is better than one's own body where the supreme transcendental Brahman resides as one's own Atma?]

The honourable and revered deity represented by the Shiva's Lingam is established on a pedestal called the Mooladhar Chakra situated in the region between the anus and the genital. [It is situated slightly to the left and rear of the Mooladhar. Refer also to Canto 6, verse no. 33, and Canto 2, verse no. 6. This Lingam refers to the Mool Kanda.] (168).

“Verse no. 169 = The Jiva (living being) is Shiva personified, and the Mooladhar is its foundation or base. It is here that the great source of cosmic energy is established in the coiled structure called the Kundalini (169).

“Verse no. 170-171 = The place which is the progenitor of all the winds and the air element, which is self-illuminated as it is the creator of the fire element and its inherent light, which is the source of Naad and its concentrated energy represented by its Bindu (the dot placed on the top of the symbol of Naad represented by the Mantra OM), which is the creator of the Jiva (the living being; the creature) in its pure and fundamental form known as the 'Hans' (a reference to the Atma of the creature residing in the subtle heart and which is pure consciousness and true identity of the Jiva), which is also the progenitor of the subtle Mana (mind and its emotional aspect, the heart), and which is the place from where all desires and yearnings originate—this place is called 'Kaam Roop Peeth', or the seat from where all worldly desires and passions spring forth. [It is also called the Bhag Chakra.] (170-171).

“Verse no. 172 = The Swadisthan Chakra is situated at the base of the genital and has the shape of a lotus with thousand petals.

The Manipurak Chakra is located in the region of the navel and it is shaped like a lotus with ten petals (172).

“Verse no. 173 = Oh Kamal Sambhav (i.e. Brahma)! The Anahat Chakra is situated in the region of the heart and it is shaped like a lotus having twelve petals.

The second seat called Purna Giri Peeth is located here (173).

“Verse no. 174 = The Vishudha Chakra is located in the pit of the throat and it is shaped like a lotus having sixteen petals.

The third Peeth called the Jalandhar Peeth is located here (174).

“Verse no. 175 = The Agya Chakra is located between the two eyebrows and is shaped like a lotus having two petals.

The fourth Peeth called the Uddiyan Mahapeeth is located on it (175).”

The Chakras at the macro level of creation (Yogshikha Upanishad, Canto 1, verse nos. 176-178)—

“Verse no. 176 = The Chaturastra Chakra is located at the site where the earth (representing the living creation and the visible world) has its beginning, and its patron deity is Lord Brahma, the creator.

After that is the Chakra shaped like a crescent moon, called the Ardha Chandrakar Chakra. Its patron deity is Lord Vishnu, the sustainer and protector of creation. This Chakra is situated on the water element (176).

“Verse no. 177 = The Agni Chakra representing the fire element is triangular in shape and its patron deity is Lord Rudra (Shiva), the concluder of creation.

The Vayu Chakra representing the wind or air element is shaped like a hexagon and its patron deity is Ishwar, the Supreme Being (177).

“Verse no. 178 = The Akash Chakra representing the sky or space element is shaped like a circle and its patron deity is Sada-Shiva (the eternal truthful Brahm).

The Bindu is in the form of Naad located in the middle of the eyebrows. This is the site of the Mana (mind and intellect) (178).

The *Dhyan Bindu Upanishad* of Krishna Yajur Veda tradition, in verse nos. 43-49 describes the two main Chakras at the lower end of the body—viz. the Muladhar Chakra and the Swadisthan Chakra. To quote—

“Verse no. 43 = The two subtle energy centers at the lower end of the body are the Muladhar Chakra¹ and Swadisthan Chakra² (43).

[Note—The Chakras are the various subtle energy centers present in the body. According to Yoga texts, when the vital energy trapped in these Chakras are activated, a person acquires immense potentials, including spiritual and mystical powers. They have been elaborately described in Upanishads dealing with Yoga and mystical forms of ritualistic worship involving meditative practices in order to enable to practitioner acquire astounding mystical and supernatural powers. Refer Saubhagya Laxmi Upanishad, Canto 3 of Rig Veda tradition, as well as Yograjo, Yogchudamani and Jabal Darshan Upanishads (Canto 4) of the Sam Veda tradition.

¹The Muladhar Chakra—It is located between genitals and anus, in the region known as the perineum.

²The Swadisthan Chakra—It is located in the groins of males and the Bhug area of females. It has a 5-headed male phallus like a sprouting seed and its counterpart in the female is the clitoris.]

“Verse no. 44-45 = Between these two (Muladhar and Swadhisthan Chakras) is located the area (site) responsible for reproduction. It is called the ‘Kaamroop’ because it is a personification of such qualities as passion, lust and desires that a creature has.

At the base of the anus there is a Chakra shaped like a Lotus with four petals. In the center of this is located the famous center of cosmic creative energy called ‘Kamakhya’. This is adored by acclaimed practitioner (because it has the same potential to ‘create’ that is also possessed by the supreme Lord of creation).

To the front of this Kamakhya is the male organ present outside the body in the anterior side of the anus (44-45).

“Verse no. 46-47 = There is a self-illuminated center of light resembling a priceless gem, symbolising the fount of a natural source of wisdom, intelligence, thoughts and discrimination. A person who is well acquainted with it is said to be an expert in Yoga.

Located at a distance measuring the width of four fingers from the epicenter of the fire element (called the Kundalini located at the base of the spine) and below the pubic bone is situated the Gonad (the testicles in the male), the organ which produces the cells responsible for reproduction. It is symbolically radiant and glowing like the hue of molten gold, and brilliant and splendorous like the dazzling streak of electric. [That is, it is a center of a very powerful source of dynamic creative energy that has the potential to generate new life in the form of a new creature from one single cell of the mother, i.e. the egg, and one from the father, i.e. the sperm. The metaphors of the ‘molten gold’ and ‘electric’ are used here to indicate the stupendous energy and dynamism of creation that is concentrated in this part of the body. If the forehead is

the site for wisdom and erudition, this lower end of the body, i.e. the gonad, is equally important if the creation is to be perpetuated.

The Swadhisthan Chakra is at the base of this center (46-47).

“Verse no. 48-49 = The area of the Swadhisthan Chakra is called the pelvic region. This site has the vital wind (the Apaana Vayu) and it is illuminated like a gem. [This is because it is the centre of the body harbouring such glorious centers of energy as the Kundalini, the Swadhisthan Chakra, the Muladhara Chakra and the reproductive organs.]

The Manipurak Chakra is situated in the region of the navel. It is shaped like a Lotus having twelve petals. It is the area that controls ‘Punya’ and ‘Paap’ done by an individual. In other words, it is the center that controls life in as much as it is through it that the embryo draws nourishment from the mother through the placenta, and being so nourished it develops and takes birth as a creature that does this and that deed in this physical world. Each deed done by him is classified as either good or bad, the former being called ‘Punya’ or something categorised as auspicious and noble, and the other is called ‘Paap’ or something demoted to the lowly class of sins and inauspiciousness (48-49).”

These Chakras and the various Peeths associated with them have also been described in *Yogshikha Upanishad*, Canto 5, verse nos. 5-15. To quote—

“Verse no. 5 = [The following verse nos. 5-15 describe the various Chakras and Peeths in the body. Reference should be made to Yograj Upanishad which describes them in similar terms.]

The area between the anus and the genital has the triangular Mooladhara. This is said to be the symbolic abode of Lord Shiva (i.e. the Shiva Lingam is said to be established here).

In fact, the Jiva (the living being) is Shiva personified (5).

[Note—Refer Canto 1, verse no. 168 and 177, and Canto 2, verse nos. 5-13.]

“Verse no. 6 = [Verse nos. 6-12 describe the various Chakras and Peeths in the body and are similar to verse nos. 168-175 of Canto 1.]

The great center of transcendental cosmic energy subtly present in the body is located here as the Kundalini. It is here that the vital winds of life as well as the fire element inherently present in the body get their subtle energy to keep themselves active (6).

“Verse no. 7 = It is here that the Bindu (the subtler dynamic forces that reveal themselves as life), Naad (the sound symbolising the revelation of this dynamic force in the form of energy represented by sound waves), Hans (the conscious Atma residing in the subtle heart and which breathes air that produces the sound ‘Hans Hans’ as it goes in and out of the body through the nostrils and throat; the rustling, hissing, rasping or bristling sound heard when one puts one’s ears close to the heart) and Mana (mind, the subtle body of this Atma) have their origin (7).

“Verse no. 8 = The Peeth (holy pilgrim site) that blesses the worshipper by fulfilling all his desires and wishes is called the ‘Kaam Roop Peeth’ and is symbolically located on the Swadhisthan Chakra. It has a hexagonal shape and situated at the base of the genitals (8).

“Verse no. 9 = The Manipurak Chakra is located in the Nabhi (navel) area. It has ten corners or petals.

The heart region has the Maha Chakra having twelve corners or petals. This Chakra cannot be harmed or suppressed or subdued in a living being (obviously because as long as the creature lives the heart continuous to beat uninterruptedly) [In other words, it is not possible to kill anyone by pressing the heart so as to force it to stop beating. This fact can easily be verified and understood in the context of the Kantha Chakra or the Vishudha Chakra located in the throat. If this Throat Chakra is pressed too hard the man suffocates to death, and on the contrary pressing of the Heart Chakra would only revive the sinking heart instead of shutting it down as usually done in emergencies when attempts are made to revive a patient suffering from a severe heart-stroke by thumping and pressing the heart.] (9).

“Verse no. 10 = Oh Kamalsambhav (Brhma)! This (Maha Chakra) is also called the Purna Giri Peeth.

The Visudha Chakra is situated in the bore or hollow of the throat. It has sixteen corners or petals (10).

“Verse no. 11 = The Jalandhar Peeth is located here (in the throat where the Vidudha Chakra is situated).

The Agya Chakra is situated between the two eyebrows. It is an excellent one with two corners or petals (11).

“Verse no. 12 = On the top of it (i.e. on the Agya Chakra) is located the Uddiyan Peeth.

All these sites in the body are symbolic abodes of the divine Shakti (the dynamic aspect of Brahm revealed as subtle energy centers) (12).

“Verse no. 13 = [Verse no. 13-15 describe the shape of the five elements from the Tantra philosophical point of view and similar to Canto 1, verse nos. 176-178.]

The realm of the earth has a symbolic four-cornered outline (shape). Its patron God is Brahma. The realm of the water has the symbolic shape of a crescent moon and its patron God is Lord Vishnu (13).

“Verse no. 14 = The realm of the fire element is triangular in shape, and its patron God is Lord Rudra (the angry form of Shiva).

The realm of the air or wind element has a hexagonal shape and its patron deity is Sankarshan¹ (14).

[Note—¹Sankarshan is the older brother of Lord Krishna, i.e. Balaram, according to the Purans. The word literally means ‘well drawn’. In his earlier incarnation, he was Laxman, the younger brother of Lord Ram. Laxman was an incarnation of Seshnath, the legendary hooded serpent on whom Lord Vishnu reclines on the surface of the cosmic ocean of milk known as Kshir Sagar. Hence, Sankarshan is Lord Seshnath who is supposed to support the earth on its hoods.]

“Verse no. 15 = The realm of the sky is rounded (and that is why we see the sky like a inverted hemisphere). Its patron deity is Sriman Narayan (Vishnu).

The realm of the Mana (mind) is in the area around the central point of the two eyebrows, and its symbolic form is the cosmic sound called Naad¹ (15).

[Note—¹The brain and its focal point where the virtues of wisdom and intelligence are located is externally marked by the tri-junction of the root of the nose and the two eyebrows. That is why when we have to pay special attention on anything or concentrate deeply on any subject or when we are in a contemplative or pensive mood, the eyebrows create a furrow at this point. It is a metaphoric way of saying that the body is attempting to focus its mind and intellect on the subject under consideration or is concentrating on something which requires special focusing of all the available powers of the brain. This point is also metaphorically said to be the location of the third eye of wisdom for the same reason. During the practice of Yoga, it is heard that the Yogi (the practitioner of Yoga) tries to fix his attention. According to ancient iconography, Lord Shiva who is the greatest Yogi is said to radiate a beam of light from this point, the beam which is so powerful that it can reduce to ashes all worldly delusions and passions. This is symbolically depicted in the ancient Puranic story which says that once when Kaamdeo, the God of passions and lust, had tried to break Shiva’s meditation on the behest of other Gods, Shiva had opened this third eye and the rays of light beamed out from it reduced to ashes Kaamdeo in an instant.

The ancient sages visualised that this point would be the focal point where the sight collected by the two eyes would be focused behind them in the mind (brain) in order to enable the man to see things with a sharply formed image having three-dimensions and in a cohesive and clear format. Otherwise, they thought, the images formed by the eye would be blurred and distorted.

The Mana takes the form of the Naad because one has to concentrate one’s mind during meditation to hear it.]”

Some of the Upanishads dealing with the concept of Chakra are the following--Saubhagya Laxmi Upanishad, Canto 3 of Rig Veda tradition; Dhyanbindu Upanishad, verse nos. 43-49, Yogkundalini Upanishad, Canto 1, verse nos. 7, 67-69, 85-86, Canto 2, verse no. 49, Canto 3, verse nos. 8-11, 12-17, Varaaha Upanishad, Canto 5, verse nos. 50, 53-53; and Yogshikha Upanishad, Canto 1, verse nos. 168-178, Canto 5, verse nos. 5-15 of the Krishna Yajur

Veda tradition; Yograjo-panishad, Yogchudamani Upanishad, and Jabal Darshan Upanishad, Canto 4 of the Sam Veda tradition.

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(B) (1) Naadis in the Body--(a) The concept of Naadi has been dealt with in all the major Upanishads dealing with Yoga—(a) Sam Veda's Jabal Darshan Upanishad, Canto 4, verse nos. 5-22 ½, 35-42, 46-47, and Yogchudamani, verse nos. 15-21. (b) Shukla Yajur Veda's Trishikhi Brahmin Upanishad, Canto 2, verse nos. 67-76. (c) Krishna Yajur Veda's Kshuriko, verse nos. 8-20; Varaaha Upanishad, Canto 5, verse nos. 23-31, 37; Yog Tattva; Dhyana Bindu Upanishad, verse nos. 50-60; Yogshikha Upanishad, Canto 5, verse no. 17-27; Yog Kundalini Upanishad, Canto 1, verse nos. 10-18. (d) Atharva Veda's Prashna Upanishad, Canto 3, verse no. 6; Mundak Upanishad, Mundak (Canto) 2, section 2, verse no. 6; Shandilya Upanishad, Canto 1, section 4, verse nos. 1, 9-11; Bhavana Upanishad, verse no. 2, stanza no. 20..

The word Naadi literally refers to a tubular duct present inside the body through which all the vital forces of life travel from one point to another and keep the body alive, active and healthy. It is through the Naadi that the vital winds known as Pran flow; it is through them that blood flows; it is through them that senses travel from the sense organs of the body to the brain and from the brain to all the corners of the body; it is through the Naadis that various juices and fluids of the body are secreted and made to reach their targeted areas. Even if one Naadi is damaged, the body suffers.

It is through the Naadis that are present in the body that Pran or life-consciousness represented by the various vital winds, sensory impulses and perceptions, and all other vital signs of life inside the body move. Yoga Upanishads say that there are seventy two thousand Naadis radiating out from the Nabhi Kanda (refer Jabal Darshan Upanishad of Shukla Yajur Veda, Canto 4, verse no. 6).

Atharva Veda's *Prashna Upanishad*, Canto 3, verse no. 6 describes the existence of one hundred chief Naadis around the heart, and each is divided into a hundred branches. Each of these branches gives out seventy two thousand more branches. Therefore the total number of Naadis springing out from the heart = 100 main Naadis x 100 sub-Naadis x 72000 more branches of each of these sub-Naadis = 72 0000000 total number of Naadis that branch out from the heart and go to each corner of the body.

The *Varaaha Upanishad* of Krishna Yajur Veda, in its Canto 5, verse nos. 22-30 describe fifteen Naadis. They are Sushumna, Alambusa, Kuhu (verse no. 23), Varuna, Yashawani, Pingla (verse no. 24), Payaswini, Saraswati (verse no. 25), Shankhini, Gandahari, Ida (verse no. 26), Hasit-jivaha, Vishwadora (27), Naad-dhara, Jwalanti (verse no. 29) and Para-randhra (verse no. 30).

According to *Jabal Darshan Upanishad* of Sam Veda, Canto 4, verse no. 6-8, out of these only fourteen Naadis are said to be the important ones—Sushumna, Pingla, Ida, Saraswati, Varuna, Pusha, Yashaswani, Hasit-jivaha, Alambusa, Kuhu, Vishwadora, Payaswini, Shankhini and Gandahari. Verse nos. 13-22 ½ of Canto 4 of the Jabal Darshan Upanishad describes the location and distribution of these Naadis in detail.

The *Bhavana Upanishad* of the Atharva Veda tradition, verse no. 2, stanza no. 20 lists fourteen main Naadis and says that they represent fourteen forms of the divine Goddess known as the Shakti. To quote—”The following fourteen Naadis (tubular ducts in the body; the nerves and veins) are like the fourteen Goddess such as Sarwa-shanksho-bhini etc.—Alumbusa, Kuhu, Vishwodar, Varuna, Hastijivha, Yashaswani, Ashwini, Gaandhaari, Pusha, Shankhini, Saraswati, Ida, Pingla, and Sushumna Naadis (2/20).”

But according to *Yogchudamani Upanishad* of Sam Veda, verse no. 15-17, and Dhyani Bindu Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda, verse nos. 52-53, there are only ten Naadis that are more important. They are—Ida, Pingla, Sushumna, Gandhari, Hasti-Jivaha, Pusha, Yashaswini, Alambusa, Kuhu and Shankhini. Their location has been described in Jabal Darshan Upanishad of Sam Veda, Canto 4, verse nos. 13-17.

Again, even out of these, only three are of the greatest importance, and they are—Sushumna, Ida and Pingla.

The Sushumna is regarded as the best and the most important one even amongst these three. It goes through the central core of the spinal cord from its base in the Kundalini right up to the Brahm Randhra at the top of the head. [Refer—Jabal Darshan Upanishad of Shukla Yajur Veda, Canto 4, verse no. 9-10]

The Ida goes to the left of it to the left nostril; and the Pingla goes to the right of it to the right nostril. [Refer—Jabal Darshan Upanishad of Shukla Yajur Veda, Canto 4, verse no. 13] The Sushumna Naadi is called the Brahm Naadi Ida Naadi is said to be the Chandra Naadi, and Pingla is said to be the Surya Naadi.

The *Shandilya Upanishad* of the Atharva Veda tradition, Canto 1, section 4, verse nos. 1, 9-11 outlines the Naadis as follows—

“Verse no. 1 = Sage Shandilya asked sage Atharva, ‘Oh Lord! What is the way to clean (purify, de-clog and revitalize) the Naadis? How many Naadis are there (in the body)? How were they created? How many vital winds flow in them? Where are they located? What are their functions? In short, please enlighten me about all the things worth knowing in this body.’ (1).

“Verse no. 9 = There are fourteen main Naadis (tubular ducts through which the vital life-forces flow inside the body) that surround the Kundalini.

These Naadis are the following—Ida, Pingla, Sushumna, Saraswati, Varuni, Pusha, Hastajivha, Yashaswani, Vishwadari, Kuhu, Shankhini, Payaswani, Alambusa, and Gandhari (9).

“Verse no. 10 = Wise ascetics assert that out of them the Sushumna Naadi is the main one, and it is capable of bearing the world (i.e. life) as well as is the path by which the ascetic attains Moksha (liberation and deliverance). [See the note of stanza no. 1 of verse no. 8 above.]

This Naadi lies at the rear of the anus and goes up the spinal cord to reach the top of the head where the Brahm-Randhra is situated. [See the note of stanza no. 2 of verse no. 8 above.]

It is clearly visible, very fine, and honoured as a pathway to Brahm who is worshipped as Lord Vishnu by his followers. [In other words, the Mantras used for doing Yoga (meditation and contemplation)—which would help in concentrating the mind and energy of the body for the purpose of activation of the Kundalini, which in turn would help the practitioner in realizing the bliss of experiencing Brahm or cosmic Consciousness—would be the Mantras of Lord Vishnu.] (10).

“Verse no. 11 = The Ida Naadi is situated to the left and the Pingla Naadi to the right of the main Naadi called the Sushumna Naadi. [The Ida and the Pingla are intertwined around the Sushumna.]

The energy of the Moon flows through the Ida Naadi, while that of the Sun flows through the Pingla Naadi.

[Now, the two opposing characteristics represented by the Moon and the Sun are being enumerated—] The Moon has a predominance of Tama Guna, while the Sun is dominated by the Raja Guna. [The Tama Guna is a metaphor for darkness and inertia, and that is why the disc of the Moon has no light of its own, and except for the full-moon night its disc is always darkened to some extent. Besides this, the Moon always shines in the night which is the period when the creature wishes to rest and shed all activities. On the other hand, the Raja Guna is associated with light and a desire to rise and be productive. This is why the Sun is self-illuminated and energetic, and its rise is associated with activity and productivity.]

The Moon is associated with Amrit or the ambrosia of life and bliss, while the Sun is linked to the scorching poison. [The soothing rays of the moonlight have a cooling effect on the scorched earth that was heated by the Sun during the day, and these rays are able to provide comfort and solace to the tormented creature. On the other hand, the sun’s rays are ferocious and cruel by nature, and they can scorch and burn if not guarded against. The white colour of the Moon’s disc is said to be due the colour of the Amrit or elixir of life and bliss stored in it by the Gods, while the Sun is said to the celestial cauldron of fire.]

These two join hands to bear the whole time between them. [That is, the full day is divided between the Moon and the Sun, and there is no phase of time beyond them or which does not fall within their jurisdiction.]

Since the Moon and the Sun symbolically move along the Ida and the Pingla Naadis as cited above, it follows that the Sushumna Naadi is the one that actually bears or holds and enjoys everything governed by time. [In other words, it is around the Sushumna Naadi that the life of a creature revolves. It is this Naadi that sustains life and consciousness in the body of the creature, where the body itself is a world in miniature form and the creature is the Atma or the pure conscious soul that lives in this world. In simple terms this is brought about by the fact that the Sushumna Naadi is the central nerve of the spinal cord, and it is through this Naadi that all the impulses of the body move from one point to another. The nerves take all the impulses to the brain, and the latter's instructions to all the organs of the body. Should the Sushumna Naadi fail, the entire circuit would be disrupted and the 'world' (here represented by the 'body') would be 'dead' as far as the 'Jiva' (here the living being represented by his Atma) is concerned. It is like the case of the main overhead high-tension electric wire snapping and plunging the entire city in darkness.]

Behind the Sushumna Naadi is located the Saraswati Naadi, and to the side of it is the Kuhu Naadi.

The Vaaruni Naadi is situated between the Kuhu and the Yashaswani Naadis.

The Payaswani Naadi is situated between the Pusha and Saraswati Naadis.

The Yashaswani Naadi is situated between the Gaandhaari and the Saraswati Naadis.

The Alambusa Naadi is located in the center of the Kanda. [The 'Kanda' literally means a root or tuber, and it is shaped like a short carrot or turnip. Its pointed end faces downwards towards the male genitalia and its upper rounded end is near the navel. The Alumbusa Naadi runs along its center.]

The Kuhu Naadi is spread below the Sushumna Naadi till the area of the genitals.

The Vaaruni Naadi is spread in all the directions below and above the Kundalini.

The Yashaswani and the Saumya Naadis go up to the big toes of the two legs.

The Pingla Naadi goes upwards and reaches the right nostrils.

The Pusha Naadi rises behind the Pingla and goes up to the right eyes.

The Yashaswani Naadi goes up to the right ears.

The Saraswati Naadi goes up to the upper surface of the tongue.

The Shankhani Naadi moves up from below and reaches the left ear.

The Gaandhaari Naadi moves up behind the Ida Naadi and goes up to the left eye.

[The Ida Naadi itself goes up to the left nostrils.]

The Alambusa Naadi radiates above and below the base of the anus.

Other minor Naadis are located inside or around these primary fourteen Naadis. There are finer Naadis inside them as well.

Just like the leaf of the banyan tree is covered by a network of veins and capillaries, the Naadis too cover each area of the creature's body¹ (11).

[Note—¹Verse no. 13 of this section says that there are in all seventy-two thousand Naadis through which the vital wind called the Samaan Vayu distributes nutrients extracted

from the food eaten and digested inside the body to all its corners. Hence we conclude that the Naadis listed in verse no. 9 are only the chief ones, whereas the total numbers of Naadis are seventy-two thousand.]

(B) (2) The importance of Naadi control and its Shodhan or purification—The Naadis (nerves, capillaries, veins and other micro-fine tubular ducts in the body of the creature through which his vital signs of life flow) need to be purified, cleansed, purged, reformed or de-clogged and revitalized to make the body function properly and enable the spiritual aspirant to make the best use of the latent energy of the divine Spirit that is lying dormant and untapped inside his own body for his long-term spiritual welfare. This process has been called ‘Shodhan’ in as much as it helps to purify and purge these Naadis of all sorts of impurities that have blocked them and prevent the free movement of vital airs and consciousness—which are synonymous with the life-factors inside the body of any living being—from moving in the body. The Upanishads dealing with Yoga (meditation) describe its various limbs or aspects, and they help in this Shodhan in a holistic manner. Some of the important principles of Yoga that aid in this endeavour are Pranayam (breath control and harnessing the vital winds inside the body), Aasans and Mudras (sitting and bodily postures that help to achieve success in Yoga), Bandhas (restrictions imposed on the body so that its vitality is retained inside and not dissipated and wasted), Yam and Niyams (the various regulations and codes of conduct that are to be strictly followed), Pratahyar (self control of the mind), Dharna (having firm conviction so that the aspirant can pursue his chosen path without getting distracted), Dhyan (concentration), etc. They all play an important role in Naadi Shodhan and compliment and supplement each other.

However, Pranayam is regarded as the main instrument of Naadi Shodhan because it helps the vital airs to give the required push needed to de-clog the already blocked Naadis. Besides this, Pranayam helps to stoke the dormant fire element present inside the Kundalini and other Chakras in the body.

The process of Naadi Shodhan in the context of the above discussion has been described in a number of Upanishads. In fact, the Trishikhi Brahmin Upanishad, in its Canto 2, verse no. 89 clearly states that Naadi Shodhan is done ‘by following all the above paths comprehensively’. Other Upanishads are, inter alia, the following—(1) Sam Veda tradition’s Jabal Darshano-panishad, canto 5-6, and Yogchudamanu-panishad, verse nos. 89-112; (2) Shukla Yajur Veda tradition’s Trishikhi-Brahmano-panishad, verse nos. 2/89-120; (3) Krishna Yajur Veda tradition’s Tejo-bindu, Dhyan Bindu, Kshuriko-panishad, verse nos. 18-20, and Yogshikha Upanishads.

Since Pranayam is the main backstay of Naadi Shodhan, a brief word about it would be in place. The word ‘Pranayam’ consists of two parts—‘Pran’ meaning the vital wind which sustains life, i.e. breath, and ‘Yam’ meaning restraint. So the ‘Pranayam’ involves exercising control over or regulating the regular flow of breath through a set of Yogic exercises.

This exercise has basically three phases—inhalation called ‘Purak’ (filling), the holding of breath called ‘Kumbhak’ (Kumbha means a pot or pitcher), and exhalation called ‘Rechak’

(cleaning, purging, de-clogging). To start with, the left nostril is closed with the help of fingers of the right hand and all the air inside the body is expelled through the right nostril. Then the breath is inhaled by the 'Eda Naadi' (i.e. left nostril), held in the abdomen for a fixed time, and then gradually exhaled through the 'Pingla Naadi' (or right nostril). The process is reversed and alternated with each other each time the breath is taken in and brought out.

The time or duration taken for inhalation is fixed as the time taken for mentally saying the 16 Maatraas (the vowel sounds of the Sanskrit alphabet). It should be held inside the body (Kumbhak) for a time which is 4 times the time taken for inhalation (i.e. the time taken for 64 Maataras to be said mentally). The gradual letting out of the breath is twice the time taken for inhalation (or 32 Maatraas). By practice, the Kumbhak phase (holding of breath) should be extended to 80 Maatraas. [Jabal Darshan Upanishad 6/3-9, Trishikhi Brahmin, 2/96-97.]

'Pranayam' should be done by an ascetic four times a day—(a) during the predawn hours before sun-rise, (b) at noon, (c) evening hours at sun-set, and (d) midnight (Trishikhi Brahmin, 2/101). 'Pranayam' produces three visible effects—(a) first the body begins to perspire. This is considered the lowest stage and the sweat should be rubbed on the skin (Yog Chudamani, verse no. 41), (b) in the second stage, the body shivers and shakes. This is the medium stage; and (c) finally, the body starts gradually lifting upwards like a hot air balloon. This is the best stage (Trishikhi Brahmin, verse nos. 104-105 and Jabal Darshan, 6/14).

All major Upanishads that deal with the subject of Yoga invariably deal with this topic of Naadi purification because it is an inseparable part of the entire process of Yoga.

The metaphysical importance of Naadi control and its Shodhan or purification has been elaborately explained in *Kshuriko-panishad* of Krishna Yajur Veda, in its verse nos. 18-20. To quote this particular Upanishad—

“Verse no. 18-19 = 'Dhyan Yoga', literally meaning meditative exercises done by intense concentration of the mind and use its energy as if it were a sharp-edged knife (much like the use of laser beams to perform complicated surgery in modern medicine), can be employed by the practitioner of Yoga (i.e. by the seeker of true liberation and deliverance) to rupture or pierce through or bore into all the Naadis and let the Pran enter them. But the Sushumna Naadi is the only one which cannot be broken through or its sanctity violated¹.

A wise and sagacious person is one who pierces all the Naadis in this life itself. This is to ensure that his Pran or vital winds and life forces present in his body, which had been till now wandering aimlessly in the subtle space inside the gross body, is able to enter into these ducts and move up the correct path that can lead to its proper destination. Since the wind trapped inside the body has originated from the all-pervading free wind or air element present in the cosmic space, its 'natural destination' is this cosmic space, and its 'liberation' is its escape from the enclosure of the gross body and mingling with the parent body of the cosmic wind outside. This is its final 'deliverance' from all artificial entrapments created by the gross body because once outside, the air element would merge indistinguishably with the cosmic wind element and lose its independent identity. A realised ascetic allows this to happen when he uses the will

power and determination of his mind to forcefully make his Pran to bore into the various Naadis, and move inside them. Once inside, the energised and heated Pran unclogs all the veins and nerves by its mere power of force and de-toxifying abilities, and moves freely inside them. It gradually moves up the body much like hot air, allowed to enter a network of tubes, has a propensity to move freely inside them and head upwards because of the fact that any hot air moves up and not down. Pran, being lighter or 'subtler' than all the other elements in the body because it now resembles hot and energised air or vital wind element, has overcome all resistance and is able to enter that path that leads to arousal of the hitherto dormant spiritual energy lying trapped in the heart as the pure consciousness of the creature. Determined and steadfast practice of meditation, along with contemplation on the main objective of doing Yoga and concentrating upon the Truth, keeps the ascetic firmly on his path.

In its final leg, the Pran is able to sufficiently gather enough energy and force and momentum to unfurl the energy in the coiled Kundalini² at the bottom of the spine. When the Pran sneaks into it, it finds entry into the Sushumna Naadi which has its lower end blocked by this Kundalini. Heated vital winds then snake up this tube, much like mercury moving up the thermometer, and finally reach the top of the head at the spot called the Brahm-Randhra. When the pressure builds up, the final explosion occurs, and this Brahm-Randhra splits open, allowing the Pran to escape into the outer space for ever. This stage is called 'Kaivalya Mukti', or the 'one of its kind' of liberation and deliverance for the aspirant seeking freedom, because once the Pran merges with the cosmic wind or air element, there is no question of its re-entering the body. This is because the body of such an ascetic is allowed to disintegrate into its basic elements, such as the earth, water and fire. The subtle space inside the body would then automatically coalesce with the open space outside. No trace of the earlier creature remains. This is obviously the final closure of the scene for him.

Thus, the wise and sagacious practitioner of Yoga should use the inviolable authority and majestic influence of his Atma, i.e. the astounding supernatural power of the pure conscious 'self', to firmly direct and strictly order the mind and the intellect to use their stupendous abilities and skills along with the energised and heated vital winds called Pran present inside the body to jointly rupture and bore through the different Naadis and penetrate them. That is, the wise ascetic uses the stupendous and powerful authority inherently bestowed in his own 'self', called his pure conscious Atma, to diligently and purposefully divert all the efforts of the two powerful instruments that he has at his disposal, i.e. the Mana (mind) and the Pran (vital winds and other life forces inside the body), to actively practice strict Yoga (as described in this Upanishad).

This Yoga practice then becomes as powerful and effective as a heated sharp-edged knife or 'Kshuri' that enables the ascetic to symbolically cut through the Naadis in a surgical and precise fashion. The revitalizing Pran then enters them and completely fills them. Then the Naadis become as vibrant and invigorated as the healthy Jasmine flower which gives out a sweet fragrance typical of it (18-19).

[Note—¹In other words, since this Sushumna Naadi symbolically represents the eternal and irrefutable Truth in creation, and remains soaked in its exuberant glory as mentioned in verse no. 16 above, it is impossible to subdue it and cause any disturbance in its serenity. This is a metaphoric way of saying that once the ascetic reaches that stage of self-realisation and Brahm-realisation when he has realised the actual Truth and the eternal fount of beatitude and felicity attendant with it, no force in creation can ever sway him from his exalted stature. He is deemed to have reached the pinnacle of spiritual achievement where he becomes invincible for the myriad temptations and delusions surging in the world which drown all other creatures in their swirling whirlpool.

The word pierce when used in the spiritual context is to overcome the resistance of the physical body and its various components, including the Naadis, to any effort that causes inconvenience or discomfort to it. Yoga is a rigorous self-disciplining spiritual exercise that does not compromise on principles. Since the body is accustomed to remaining engrossed in comforts and enjoying pleasures emanating from the material world, it is natural for it to resist any change in the status and be subjected to control and discipline. The Naadis are singled out for such ‘piercing or rupturing’ or vanquishing or overcoming or subduing because it is through the network of Naadis that the body keeps itself alive as consciousness flows through them. The Naadis carry sense impulses from one part of the body to the other; it is through them that the blood flows; it is through the Naadis that the mind is able to receive the sensory inputs from the sense organs located on the surface of the body and then help the body to respond; it is the Naadis which are like the central network of wires and circuits of an electronic equipment. If the Naadis are blocked or made to stop working, the body would be as good as dead. Hence, the best way to control the entire edifice of the body is to control its command and control network in the form of the Naadis.

²Kundalini—The Yog Kundali Upanishad, Canto 3, verse nos. 12-16 of the Krishna Yajur Veda tradition is dedicated entirely on this concept of Kundalini. Other major Upanishads that deal with the topic of Yoga also deal with the concept of Kundalini because both are intertwined concepts.]

“Verse no. 20 = In this way, the wise ascetic should properly understand how to establish his control over the different Naadis, those which are conducive to his spiritual upliftment and therefore considered ‘Shubh’ or auspicious (such as the Virja, Pingla and Ida Naadis) as well as those which relate more to his worldly interactions and mundane existence (such as the Naadis that control his digestive, excretory and reproductive functions).

The Sushumna Naadi is superior to all the Naadis in the body, and the wise and sagacious ascetic is one who focuses his attention on this Naadi. That is, he diligently practices to divert his Pran (vital winds and life-infusing conscious factors) into this duct and channelise the Pran’s energy into activating it so that the Pran can ultimately reach the point on the top of the head, the Brahm-Randhra, from where it can finally make its exit from the body for good, thereby liberating the ascetic from the shackle of the gross body for ever, and delivering his

soul from the compulsion of having to live in this body to the accompaniment of its associated torments.

When his attention is exclusively and firmly fixed on this Sushumna Naadi, he obtains access to the supreme transcendental Brahm representing the eternal fount of truth, beatitude and felicity. This achievement provides him with permanent liberation and deliverance from the body. In other words, he does not have to take birth again with a body¹ (20).

[Note—¹This is because he has already detached himself from all the deeds done by the body, being totally unattached with the latter, and not-involved in the world in which the body lives, thereby freeing him from either being associated with these deeds and their consequences, whether good or bad, or with any of the entrapments of the world and the latter's tainting effects. He has also realised the delusory nature of the artificial world of material objects, and therefore has lost all charms and attractions for it along with the material comforts and sensual pleasures that it offers to the creature. With no baggage of insatiate desires and yearnings, no unfulfilled aspirations and hopes, he has nothing pending and unfulfilled at the time of death for which he would want to take another birth in order to finish off his incomplete tasks or fulfill his dreams. This state of total and sincere renunciation entitles him to become a 'liberated' soul, and since 'soul' is an disembodied ethereal body of infinite cosmic proportions, being another form of the cosmic wind or air element, it simply coalesces with this element as soon as the ascetic dies and the Pran leaves the gross body by rupturing the skull at the point of the Brahm-Randhra.

In this context, refer Amrit Naad Upanishad, verse no. 27, and Yog Kundali Upanishad, Canto 3, verse nos. 12-17 both of which belong to the Krishna Yajur Veda tradition.]”

(B) (3) The movement of Pran in the main Naadis—The Prans are the different vital airs or winds present inside the body that not only infuse the vital spark of life inside the body but are often used as a synonym for the life-consciousness that is present in the body of a living being that distinguishes it from a body that has no life in it. In other words, Pran and Atma are the two sides of the same coin known as the living creature.

The main Naadis and the movement of Pran in them have been described in *Paingalopanishad* of Shukla Yajur Veda, Canto 2, verse no. 12. It says that when the creature is in dreaming state of existence, his Prans move along the various Naadis present in the body.

The Dhyani Bindu Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda, in its verse nos. 52-60 describes briefly the main ten Naadis, their location, and how the different vital airs/winds called the Prans in the body move in them. To quote this Upanishad—

“Verse no. 52-53 = Out of these (seventy two Naadis) there are only ten main Naadis through which the Pran (vital life giving forces present inside the body) move or pulsate. They are the

following—Ida, Pingla, Sushumna, Gandhari, Haritjivha, Pusha, Yashaswani, Alumbusa, Kuhu, and Shankhini (52-53).

[Note—Refer Jabal Darshan Upanishad, Canto 4, verse nos. 13-17 of Sam Veda tradition which describes how these ten main Naadis branch out to different part of the body from the Kanda.]

“Verse no. 54-57 = Practitioners of Yoga are expected to have a thorough knowledge of these Naadi network. The three main Naadis amongst these are the Ida, Pingla and Sushumna, and the vital life known as Pran continuously pulsates and moves inside them. The patron God of Ida Naadi is Sun, of Pingla is Moon, and of Sushumna is Fire.

The Sushumna is in the center of the other two Naadis, the Ida being to its left and Pingla to its right. These three Naadis are like the highway through which the Pran moves.

The ten vital winds in the body are called Pran. They are the following—Pran, Apaana, Samaana, Udaana, Vyan, Naaga, Kurma, Krikan, Devdutta, and Dhananjaya. Out of them, the first five are the chief Prans while the last five are subsidiary Prans¹ (54-57).

[Note—¹According to various Upanishads, especially the Trishiki Brahmin Upanishad, 1/5 and 2/77-87, and Paingalo-panishad, cantos 2, verse nos. 3 of the Shukla Yajur Veda tradition, the ‘Pran’ (vital wind) is classified into ten types depending upon the function that the wind element performs in the body of a creature. Amongst them, there are five winds which are considered more important than the rest. As such, these five are called the main ‘Pran’, or ‘Panch Prans’, and they are the following:—(1) Pran, the wind element, as breath, that is exhaled as well as inhaled, and which is responsible for infusing and sustaining life in the body; it is considered the chief wind in the whole setup because without life no other wind would be of any significance to the creature; (2) Apaana, the wind that passes down the intestines and is responsible for digestion of the food taken by the creature and its excretion through the anus and urinary organs (kidneys); (3) Samaana, the wind that is responsible for equal distribution of nourishment throughout the body, as well as in circulation of blood; (4) Udaana, the wind that helps the body to rise and move about, it also helps the body to expel toxic waste gases in the body through the nostrils and mouth in the form of exhalation and cough; and (5) Vyan, the wind that helps in maintaining equilibrium and pressure within the body, and it also controls the functioning of the other winds.

Besides the above, there are five subsidiary winds which act more like assistants to the chief Prans. They are:- (1) Naaga—this junior wind which helps in exhaling breath and belching; (2) Kurma—this subsidiary wind helps the eyelids to open and shut; (3) Krikan—this creates the sensation of hunger; (4) Devdutta—this creates sleep; and (5) Dhananjaya—it prevents decay and deformation of the body immediately after death for some time.

According to Subala Upanishad, canto 9, verse no.1-14 of the Shukla Yajur Veda tradition, these ten winds have the following functions—(1) Pran—this controls eyes and the faculty of sight (verse 1); (2) Apaana—this controls ears and the faculty of hearing (verse 2); (3) Vyan—this controls nose and the faculty of smell (verse 3); (4)

Udaan—this controls the tongue and the faculty of taste (verse 4); (5) Saman—this controls the skin and the faculty of touch (verse 5); (6) Vairambh—this controls speech (verse 6); (7) Mukhya—this controls the hands (verse 7); (8) Antarayam—this controls the legs (verse 8); (9) Prabhanjan—this controls the anus (verse 9); (10) Kurma—this controls the genitals (verse 10); (11) Shyen—this controls the Mana or the thoughts and emotions (verse 11); (12) Krishna—this controls the discrimination, intellect and wisdom (verse 12); (13) Shwet—this controls Ahankar or the notion of ego, pride, arrogance, vanity etc. (verse 13); (14) Naag—this controls the ‘Chitta’ or the faculty of concentration, memory, sub-conscious, reasoning (verse 14).

Location of the five chief vital winds, called the Panch Prans, in the body—(1) Pran—it is present in the mouth, nose, heart, navel, big toe of the leg; (2) Apaana—it is present in the intestines and anus, lower abdomen, thighs, knees; (3) Saman—it is uniformly present throughout the body; (4) Udaan—it is present in the hands, legs, joints of the body; and (5) Vyan—it is located in the ears, thighs, waist, heels, shoulders, throat. The subsidiary winds as listed above, i.e. Naag, Kurma, Krikar, Devdutta and Dhananjay are located in the skin, muscles and the bones.

Besides the Upanishad mentioned above, there are others that elaborately describe the vital winds, their locations, their functions, how they are satisfied, along with their significance. The chief amongst them are (1) Chandogya Upanishad in its canto 3, sections 13-18; canto 5, sections 19-23 (describes how the five winds are satisfied); and canto 7, section 15, (2) Jabal Darshan Upanishad, canto 4, verse no.23-24 of the Sam Veda tradition, (3) Maitrayanu Upanishad, canto 2, verse no.6-7 of the same Veda (which describes the functions of these winds), (4) Subalo Upanishad, canto 9, verse no.1-14, (5) Paingalo-panishad, canto 2, verse no.3 of the Shukla Yajur Veda tradition, and (6) Amritnadao-panishad, verse no. 33-38 of the Krishna Yajur Veda tradition. These vital winds have also been elucidated upon in sage Veda Vyas’ Adhyatma Ramayan, Aranya Kand, Canto 4, verse no. 38-39.]

“Verse no. 58 = The subtle vital forces of life called Pran collectively move and oscillate in these thousands of Naadis, injecting life or ‘Pran’ into the otherwise lifeless gross body of the creature. The living beings move up and down under the influence of the Pran and Apaana respectively¹ (58).

[Note—¹In metaphysical terms this means that they attain spiritual upliftment when their Pran is more active, while they get demoted to the mundane world of lowly life marked by grossness and inertia when the Apaana wind is more active. In more physical terms the movement of Pran refers to the process of breathing, while the movement of Apaana refers to the peristaltic movement that helps the food to move down the intestines. The breath (Pran) which brings in fresh oxygen-laden air inside the body and helps to rejuvenate the tissues on the one hand and removes toxic gases and other lighter waste products of the body when it is exhaled, and the movement of food in the alimentary canal, its digestion and expulsion of waste products from the body governed by the

Apaan wind are both essential and indispensable parts of life because no life can survive without either of them.]

“Verse no. 59-61 = The Pran (here referring to the breath passing through the nostrils when one breathes) moves sometimes through the path which goes to the left (of the central Sushumna Naadi, i.e. through the Ida Naadi passing up to the left nostril), and sometimes through the one that goes to the right (of the central Sushumna Naadi, i.e. through the Pingla Naadi passing up to the right nostril). The Pran wind is so subtle and sublime that it cannot be visibly seen.

Just like a ball thrown at random by the player moves restlessly in various directions, bouncing here and there and changing its course every now and then unpredictably, the creature is also buffeted and kicked around (like the ball)¹ by the two prominent winds called the Pran and Apaana, and he moves restlessly in so many places (and in so many wombs or takes so many births).

The tug and pull of these two winds on the creature is much like a bird being pulled down by the string tied to its legs while it attempts to fly off in the sky². An ascetic who is well acquainted with this fact is regarded as really wise and enlightened (59-60).

[Note—¹The same idea has been described in Yogchudamani Upanishad, verse no. 27-28 of Sam Veda tradition. It says—”Just like a ball or balloon being thrown or kicked around by players, a creature (an individual) cannot remain stable and steady for long because it is under the spell of Pran, Apaana and other vital winds which constantly keep it restless, agitated, always mobile and fidgety and in a state of constant flux (27).

The creature, under the buffeting influence or thrust of the vital winds or airs, is compelled to move upwards or downwards, to the left and to the right (like an air-filled balloon) so swiftly that it loses its bearings and does not know what is happening to it² (28) [27-28]”.

These winds slap and dash against the sail of a ship on a high sea, as it were, tossing and turning it with the lashing of every gust. The creature cannot sit quietly and calmly in the ship because these vital wind forces continue to flap and flutter the sail, whipping the ship recklessly in the churning waters of the sea represented by this world.

The creature’s body is like the balloon or a football, as it is filled with air called the vital winds. Even as a balloon or an air-filled light ball moves with the slightest touch, is easily tossed about violently in a squall or gale and it cannot remain at a single point for long even when there is no apparent breeze blowing, the creature also has an inbuilt and inherent natural tendency to be always on the move, remain restless and be fidgety. The biggest proof of this fact is witnessed when a dead body is observed. All the rest of the organs of a body while it was alive are present in a corpse, the only imperceptible element which has left the body is ‘Pran’ or the vital wind. The corpse becomes heavy than a living man and it lies motionless if it is not moved by others; it has no capacity to move on its own and it becomes heavy like lead. So it is clear that it was the ‘Pran’ that made the body light weight, agile and active much like the air-filled balloon or ball. Once the Pran leaves the body, the latter becomes heavy as lead.

The creature is flung around so rapidly in quick succession in waves of emotions and sentiments originating in its heart and mind due to the various influences of the external world that it is not able to discern and make out what is transpiring. It becomes completely disoriented in the topsy-turvy path of transmigration. It does not get a chance to bring itself together and realise who it is, what it truly is, where does it belong, what is the correct direction it should take and which direction it is actually heading to, where should it go and where it should not. Taking the example of a boat in a stormy high sea, the harried creature is so rapidly hurled and tossed about like a ball and thrown over board that it is more concerned with grabbing any float at hand just to avoid getting drowned than to focus on long term spiritual goals of life. Its immediate concern is the survival in the next moment, and not the moment beyond the first. Another good example would be a balloon or a dry leaf or a kite caught in a storm. There is no need to elaborate what happens to them. The allegory will aptly summarise the comic but alarming situation the trapped creature faces.

²The analogy of the bird is used here to emphasise the point that the creature has a natural tendency to remain free like the bird, but it allows itself to be tied voluntarily in shackles of delusions pertaining to this world out of its own ignorance, and its unending greed and desires, and gets trapped as a result much like the bird which falls for the trap laid for it by the cunning bird-catcher. The tug and pull in the world with its astounding variety of magnificent charms and fascinating colours, no matter how transient and horrifying they are in the long run, are nevertheless very enthralling and captivating for the time being for the creature, and the latter has no inclination to look ahead and see the horrendous consequences of falling for them. This is the ‘downward pull of the Apaana wind’, used here in a metaphoric way because it is this wind that moves down the body through the intestines and helps to push the eaten food down the alimentary canal and out through the anus. On the other hand, the Pran moves in the upwards directions as is obvious when we observe the breath which moves out of the lungs and goes up to the nostril to be exhaled. This ‘upwards movement of the Pran’ is a metaphoric way of saying that the creature is seeking spiritual upliftment, it is ‘looking up’.]”

(B) (4) The Naadis as avenues of a city—According to *Yogshikha Upanishad*, Canto 1, verse no. 165, these Naadis are likened to main ‘avenues’ of a city represented by the body in which the Atma, the true ‘self’ of the creature lives during its sojourn in this world.

(B) (5) The Naadi Chakra—This is a circular structure located below the navel and in the region of the internal genital organs. Its nearest neighbours are the Kanda and the Kundalini. It is from here that all the Naadis (nerves) of the body originate. The *Varaaha Upanishad* of Krishna Yajur Veda tradition, in its Canto 5, verse no. 22 describes the Naadi Chakra. To quote—”The Naadi Chakra is a wheel-like structure where all the Naadis have their central origin, and is located in this region (of the Kanda which is an elongated tuberos structure located inside the body between the genitals and the anus). This Chakra is like a circular saw with an edge that has twelve serrations. This Naadi

Chakra is said to the center which bears the body, which supports the body. [The reason is that if the nerves fail, the entire body's normal functioning fails. Such a body is a burden on its own self.]

The Kundalini (the coiled subtle energy center of the body) is also located here (22).”

(B) (6) The place of origin of the main Naadis—The Dhyani Bindu Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda, in its verse nos. 50-51 says that the Naadis have their origin in the Kanda. To quote—”It is only till the time that the living being is not aware of the essential truths behind these (reproductive) organs that he is remains trapped in the whirlpool or net of delusions and ignorance¹.

Above the region of the perineum and below the navel is the cluster of Naadis (ducts in the body; the nerves and veins) called the Kanda (literally meaning a root like structure like the sweet potato or carrot or radish). It is from here that seventy two thousand Naadis originate. From amongst them, there are seventy two Naadis that are more important (50-51).

[Note—¹That is, till the time a man does not understand that the reproductive organs are meant to carry forward the legacy of the supreme Brahm in the way of procreation, and are not at all meant for sexual indulgences and gratification of carnal desires of the body, he remains trapped in ignorance-induced delusions and swept off in its tide. That is, he foolishly thinks that his sexual organs are meant for sexual enjoyments, pleasures and self-gratifications instead of realising that they are tools to participate in the cosmic scheme of creation. This eclectic thinking should be natural to a wise and enlightened man because he is deemed to be one who is aware that he is not an ordinary mortal creature but Brahm personified. The sexual organs are meant to fulfill some divine mandate and not for indulgence and sexual enjoyments. Refer note no. 3 of verse no. 36 above.

So as soon as this wisdom dawns in his mind, he begins to see his own self as a personification of the Supreme Being capable of generating new forms of life in the form of his offspring almost from scratch, besides creating this colourful and many-faceted world of magnificent charms and sights. He makes new discoveries, new innovations, improves on and adds to what the original creator has created in some earlier time. In other words, he possesses the same ‘creative and generating’ powers and potentials as possessed by the Supreme Being. This is exactly the main purpose of the great teachings of the Vedas and Upanishads—to kindle self realisation in the man and make him realise that he is not an ordinary mortal like other ordinary creatures in this creation who are destined to lead a life ending in death and rebirth depending on what that creature has done in its previous life, but someone specially privileged and endowed to get an opportunity to charter his own course of redemption and salvation which no other forms can do with the same ease that is available to him.]”

There are other Upanishads that describe the *Naadis and the direction in which they go*, their *destination*, and their *functions* has been detailed in Dhyan Bindu Upanishad, verse no. 51-60, Varaaha Upanishad, Canto 5, verse no. 22-30, and Yoshikha Upanishad, Canto 5, verse no. 17-27 of the Krishna Yajur Veda; and in the Jabal Darshan Upanishad of Sam Veda, Canto 4, verse nos. 13-22 ½ of the Sam Veda tradition.

Now let us see them one by one.

The *Varaaha Upanishad* of the Krishna Yajur Veda, Canto 5, verse no. 22-30 describe the origin and location of the main fifteen Naadis. To quote—

“Verse no. 22 = The Naadi Chakra (the wheel-like structure where all the Naadis have their central origin) is located in this region. This Chakra is like a circular saw with an edge that has twelve serrations. This Naadi Chakra is said to the center which bears the body, which supports the body. [The reason is that if the nerves fail, the entire body’s normal functioning fails. Such a body is a burden on its own self.]

The Kundalini (the coiled subtle energy center of the body) is also located here (22).

“Verse no. 23 = [The various important Naadis are being narrated now. These Naadis have been described in other Upanishads also, e.g. Yoshikha Upanishad, Jabal Darshan and Yogchudamani.]

The Sushumna Naadi covers the opening of the Brahm Randhra. (This is a slit-like opening from where the subtle energy of the body enters the spinal cord and moves upwards.) The other two Naadis that accompany Sushumna Naadis are called Alambusa and Kuhu (23).

“Verse no. 24 = Beyond this Anant (Sushumna) Naadi are present the pair of Naadis called Varuna and Yashaswani. To the right of this Anant (Sushumna) Naadi is present the Pingla Naadi (24).

“Verse no. 25 = Beyond it (Pingla) are present the two Naadis called Pusha and Payaswani. Behind the Sushumna is located the Saraswati Naadi (25).

“Verse no. 26 = Beyond it (Saraswati) are located the two Naadis called Shankhini and Gandhari. To the left of the Sushumna Naadi is located the Ida Naadi (26).

“Verse no. 27 = Beyond it (Ida) are located the Hastijivaha and Vishwodari Naadis. These Naadis are present in a circle like the spokes of a wheel (27).

“Verse no. 28 = These twelve Naadis bear the twelve vital winds¹. [That is, the twelve vital life-sustaining airs of the body move through these channels of the body to support the entire body and give it its conscious sensation of life and vitality.]

These Naadis are of different colours² just like tubes are wrapped by coverings of varying colours to distinguish one from the other. [The colours are probably due to the presence of one dominant wind flowing thorough a particular Naadi. It is like having a complex electric gadget with wires of different colours to mark one from the other so that there is no confusion between any two of them.] (28).

[Note—¹The vital winds are the following—According to Subalo-panishad, Canto 9, verse no.1-14 of the Shukla Yajur Veda tradition, there are fourteen vital winds present in the body. It lists their functions as follows—(1) Pran—this controls eyes and the faculty of sight (verse 1); (2) Apaana—this controls ears and the faculty of hearing (verse 2); (3) Vyan—this controls nose and the faculty of smell (verse 3); (4) Udaan—this controls the tongue and the faculty of taste (verse 4); (5) Samaana—this controls the skin and the faculty of touch (verse 5); (6) Vairambh—this controls speech (verse 6); (7) Mukhya—this controls the hands (verse 7); (8) Antarayam—this controls the legs (verse 8); (9) Prabhanjan—this controls the anus (verse 9); (10) Kurma—this controls the genitals (verse 10); (11) Shyen—this controls the Mana or the thoughts and emotions (verse 11); (12) Krishna—this controls the discrimination, intellect and wisdom (verse 12); (13) Shwet—this controls Ahankar or the notion of ego, pride, arrogance, vanity etc. (verse 13); (14) Naag—this controls the ‘Chitta’ or the faculty of concentration, memory, sub-conscious, reasoning (verse 14).

According to other Upanishads such as Trishikhi Brahmin Upanishad, Canto 2, verse nos. 77-87 of Shukla Yajur Veda tradition, there are ten Prans, viz. Pran, Apaana, Samaana, Udaan, Vyan, Nag, Kurma, Krikar, Devdutta and Dhananjay. So, it is hard to say which two Prans has this present Upanishad of ours has avoided in the absence of any specific names. Perhaps the remaining two winds flow thorough the two Naadis mentioned below in verse no. 29.

²Colour of the vital winds—The Dhyandindu Upanishad, verse nos. 95-99 of the Krishna Yajur Veda tradition not only describes the ‘colours’ of the five principle winds but also their ‘Beej Mantras’.]

“Verse no. 29 = In the area of the navel, there is whirling subtle energy center called the ‘Nabhi Chakra’. [Nabhi = navel; Chakra = wheel.] The two glorious Naadis called the Naad-dhara and the Jwalanti are located here.

The Naad-dhara is kept active because of the cosmic vibration called Naad resonating through it. The Jwalanti, as the name suggests, is radiant and splendorous with the cosmic energy flowing through it. [It is believed that this Nabhi Chakra is a symbolic center of the cosmic Sun in the body, and its energy flows through this Naadi.] (29).

“Verse no. 30 = The other two glorious Naadis present here are Para-randhra and Sushumna. All these four Naadis (Naad-dhara, Jwalanti, Para-randhra and Sushumna) are radiant and glorious like gems. All of them are blocked at their lower end by the mouth of the Kundalini (30).”

The *Yoshikha Upanishad*, Canto 5, verse no. 17-27 has to say on the subject—

“Verse no. 17 = Situated on the Mooladhar triangle is the Sushumna Naadi (tubular duct) measuring about twelve fingers width in length. It is also called ‘Brahm Naadi’. [This is because it links the Kundalini directly to the Brahm Randhra at the top of the head and it is through it that the Pran Vayu, the vital winds, rises from the base of the body to lift and finally escape through the Brahm Randhra to provide liberation and deliverance to the ascetic who practices Yoga. The cosmic Naad representing the presence of Brahm is also heard when the vital Pran wind moves up in it. In other words, this Sushumna Naadi helps an ascetic to become Brahm realised, and hence the name.]

It is believed that it is like a bamboo which has been split into two at its base (17).

“Verse no. 18 = On both the side of it are the two Naadis called Ida and Pingla which go up to the nostrils (18).

“Verse no. 19 = The Naadi on the left of Sushumna is Ida, and the vital wind that moves in it has a golden (Hem) hue or shade (i.e. it is of a yellowish tinge)¹.

To the right of Sushumna is the Pingla Naadi which represents the Sun God. [That is, the vital wind that blows through it has the vitality and energy that is equivalent to that of the sun.]² (19).

[Note—¹According to Dhyanbindu Upanishad, verse nos. 95 of the Krishna Yajur Veda, the vital wind which has this colour is the Apaana wind. To quote—”The Beej or seed letter of the Apaana wind (the primary air which moves downwards in the body and helps in food intake and its movement through the intestines, its digestion and elimination from the body) is the Sanskrit alphabet ‘Ra’. It has the hue of golden yellow resembling the brilliant sun, and represents the fire element.”

²By saying that the vital wind passing through the Pingla represents the sun and the fact that the sun is like a hot piece of gold and yellow in colour, it is implied that both the Naadis are equally important and carry the vital life forces in them. This is a very obvious observation because one breathes through both the nostrils and both are equally important for the normal health of the man. Even if one of the nostrils is clogged as during severe colds, notwithstanding which, the body feels suffocated. Further, during the process of Pranayam or breath control exercise, the inhalation and exhalation of air, called Purak and Rechak respectively, are done alternately through the left nostril and right nostril, i.e. through the Ida and Pingla Naadis respectively.]

“Verse no. 20 = In the navel region there is a Naadi called Vilambini. It is from here (navel) that all the Naadis originate—both the ones that go upwards and the ones that go downwards in the body (20).

“Verse no. 21 = This clutch of Naadis in the region of the navel is called the Naadi Chakra, and it is like the egg of a hen.

The two Naadis called Gandhari and Hast-Jivaha originate from it and go up to the two eyes (thereby controlling the function of seeing) (21).

“Verse no. 22 = The two Naadis called Pusha and Alambusa originate from there and go up to the two ears (thereby controlling the function of hearing).

The great Naadi called Shura rises from here and goes up to the center of the two eyebrows. [Hence, this Naadi helps in concentration of attention and focusing of the mind, especially during meditation. It also helps the ascetic in self realisation when it is said that the third eye of wisdom located in this spot is opened.] (22).

“Verse no. 23 = The Vishwodara Naadi is also located there, and it helps to take in all the four types of foods¹ (by creating a taste for them and helping in their digestion). [That is, this Naadi controls the entire function of digestion and taste.]

The Naadi called Saraswati rises from here (Naadi Chakra) and goes up to the tongue (thereby controlling the function of speaking) (23).

“Verse no. 24 = The Naadi called Raka also has its seat here (Nabhi Chakra). It creates the strength to drink. [Hence, it controls the function of thirst and the ability to drink and hold this drink inside the body without immediately vomiting it out.]

Besides this function, it creates hunger and clears mucous from the nostrils. [Therefore, it has a direct role to play in colds and catarrhs.] (24).

“Verse no. 25 = The Naadi called Shankhini originates here (Nabhi Chakra) and goes up to the throat and faces downwards there, pointing to the place of its origin (navel). It helps to take the nutrients of the food eaten to the mind (brain). [Hence, it provides nourishment to the brain and controls its proper health and functioning.] (25).

“Verse no. 26 = There are three Naadis that go downwards from the navel. Out of them, the Naadi named Kuhu helps in elimination of stool and the one named Vaaruni helps in passage of urine (26).

“Verse no. 27 = The Naadi named Chitra goes up to the Siwani (the suture between the male genital and the anus) and controls the discharge of sperms (semen). [Therefore, it controls sexual behaviour, male potency and virility.]

I have described the Naadi Chakra (the network of Naadis) to you (27).”

The *Jabal Darshan Upanishad* of Sam Veda, in its Canto 4, verse nos. 13-22 ½ describes the main Naadis and their distribution. To quote—

“Verse no. 13-16 = [The location of the chief nerves is described in the following verses—] Oh sage! It (Kundalini) blocks the mouth of the ‘Brahma Randhra’ (located at the base of the spine) with its own tip. To the left of the ‘Sushumna’ is the ‘Eda’ nerve, and to the right is the ‘Pingla’ nerve (13). The ‘Saraswati’ and ‘Kuhu’ nerves are located on either side, slightly on the back of the ‘Sushumna’ nerve. At the back of the ‘Eda’ nerve is situated the ‘Gandhari’ nerve, and on its front side is present the ‘Hastijihvaha’ nerve (14). At the back of the ‘Pingla’ nerve is located the ‘Pusa’ nerve, and to its front is present the ‘Yashaswini’ nerve. In between the ‘Kuhu’ and the ‘Hastijihvaha’ nerves is located the ‘Vishwodari’ nerve (15). The ‘Varuna’ nerve is located in between the Yashaswini and the ‘Kuhu’ nerves. The ‘Payaswini’ nerve is situated between the ‘Pusa’ and the ‘Saraswati’ nerves (16) [13-16].

“Verse no. 17-20 = The ‘Shankhini’ nerve is located between the ‘Gandhari’ and the ‘Saraswati’ nerves. The ‘Alambusa’ nerve passes through the center of the ‘Nabhi Kanda’ and goes up to the anus (17). The ‘Sushumna’ nerve is also called ‘Raka’. To the east of it is the ‘Kuhu’ nerve. It is present both in the lower part as well as the upper part of the body, and it extends right up to the right nostril (18). The ‘Eda’ nerve goes right upto the left nostril. The ‘Yashaswini’ nerve extends up to the big toe of the left foot (19). The ‘Pusa’ nerve goes up behind the ‘Pingla’ nerve and reaches up to turn towards the left eye, while the ‘Payaswini’ nerve has been said to go right up to right ear (20) [17-20].

“Verse no. 21-22 = Oh sage! The ‘Saraswati’ nerve extends upwards till the tongue; the ‘Hastijihvaha’ nerve extends down up to the big toe of the left foot (21). The nerve named ‘Shankhini’ has spread up to the left ear. Experts in Vedanta say that the ‘Gandhari’ nerve goes up to the left eye (22) [21-22].

[Note—Careful reading of verse nos. 13-22 shows that (a) ‘Alambusa’ is the only nerve which passes down from the tip of the ‘Kanda’ located in the area of the navel, through its central core, up to the anus, while verse no. 23 (below) tells us that Vishwodara also passess through the center of Kanda. (b) The rest of the 13 nerves out of the total 14 pass through the spinal cord right up to the upper organs of the body —the nose, the ears, the eyes and the head, as well as to the lower part—the toes and the sole of the foot.]

“Verse no. 22 ½ = The ‘Vishwodara’ nerve lies in the center of the ‘Nabhi Kanda’.”

(B) (7) The patron Gods of the different Naadis are enumerated in Jabal Darshan Upanishad, Canto 4, verse nos. 35-40. To quote—

“Verse no. 35-36 = Oh Sage! Shiva is the patron God of the ‘Sushumna’ nerve while Vishnu is of ‘Eda’ and Brahmaa of ‘Pingla’ nerves. ‘Viraat’ (the macrocosmic form of Brahma) is the

patron God of Saraswati (35). The 'Pusa' nerve has 'Aditya' (the Sun-God) bearing the same name (i.e., the sun is also called 'Pusa'), the 'Varuna' nerve has 'Vayu God' (i.e., the Wind-God) as its patron, while the 'Hastijihvaha' nerve has 'Varuna' (Water-God) as its patron God (36) [35-36].

"Verse no. 37-38 = Oh the best amongst sages! The Sun-God is the patron deity for the 'Yashaswini' nerve, while the 'Alambusa' nerve has 'Varun' (the Water-God) as its patron God (37). The 'Kuhu' nerve has 'hunger' as its patron Goddess, and the moon is the patron God of both the 'Gandhari' and the 'Shankhini' nerves. 'Prajapati is the patron God of the 'Payaswini' nerve (38) [37-38].

"Verse no. 39-40 = The Fire-God is the patron God for the 'Vishwodar' nerve. Oh great sage! The Moon-God always moves through and pervades throughout in the 'Eda' nerve (39), while the Sun-God does so in the 'Pingla' nerve (40).

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(C) (1) The Kundalini theory—The Kundalini is a coiled subtle cosmic energy center of the body that lies at the lower end of the spinal cord, blocking it with one of its ends. The subtle energy of the Kundalini represents the dynamism of the consciousness present in the body of the living being. By doing Yogic practices, the stupendous energy trapped in its coils can be released by the unplugging of its mouth which opens into the 'Sushumna' nerve. This energy then rises up the spinal cord and ultimately reaches the top of the head. The Yogi who practices this Kundalini activation, called 'Kundalini Jagran', experiences brilliance and dazzle unmatched by any other experience. Since it requires a lot of willful effort and energy to make this happen, and an activated Kundalini helps the spiritual aspirant achieve success in his meditation and contemplation on the one hand and providing sufficient energy to his Pran or vital life forces present inside the body to enable the pure consciousness known as the Atma to experience extreme bliss and ecstasy that comes with 'self-realisation', the process is called 'Shakti Chaalan'—or activation of the hidden energy of the body for the aspirant's spiritual upliftment.

According to this theory, the energy centre of a man is in the shape of a coil having three and a half loops, called Kundalini, located at the base of the spine. Each full round of the coil represents one Guna—i.e. one coil stands for the Sata Guna or purity, one coil for the Raja Guna or passions, and one coil for Tama Guna or inertia. The half coil stands for the modification of Prakriti or Nature. Every person has this Kundalini lying in a dormant state. When this energy centre is awakened, the man is able to experience total fulfillment and attain oneness with divinity. This energy centre can be activated by incessant Japa and Meditation.

There are three dimensions of space—the physical space ‘Mahakasha’ (the plane where the planets and stars exist), the mind-intellect space called the ‘Chittakash’ (the plane where the creature thinks and imagines) and the knowledge space called ‘Chidakash’ (where the supreme and infinite knowledge resides; it is the pure consciousness that stage here). The word ‘Akash’ means space, limitless, boundless sky whereas ‘Maha’ means great, ‘Chitta’ means mind, and ‘Chidda’ means eternal enlightenment which is pure consciousness.

The Kundalini theory of Yoga states that there are three very narrow channels running through the backbone (spine) from bottom to head. The left channel is called ‘Ida’, the right channel is called ‘Pingla’ and the central channel is called ‘Shusumna’. When we are physically and mentally active, our energy passes through ‘Pingala’ channel and the breath passes strongly through right nostril. When the body and the mind are resting, the energy passes through ‘Ida’ channel and the breath through the left nostril. The 3rd channel, the ‘Shusumna’, is usually closed at its lower end. It can be made to open through intense spiritual practices such as Japa and meditation. When opened, the energy of the Kundalini passes (ascends) through the ‘Shusumna’ channel and rises up towards the brain. When this happens, the aspirant gets access to the knowledge space (Chiddakash). Ultimately, when this energy reaches the highest point in the channel, a point called ‘Sahasrara Chakra’, the man is able to experience bliss and ecstasy associated with the ultimate experience of the truth called Brahma. This is ‘God or Brahma realisation’ in terms of Yoga. But the vehicle to do this is Japa of the divine Mantra and meditation with the help of deep contemplation.

The ‘Fire’ required to heat and activates the ‘Apan wind’ and push it upwards comes from the ‘Sun Chakra’ located between the navel and heart. It is done by ‘Surya Pranayam’. During this meditative process, it is imagined that flames are flaring up from the sun residing in the region of the navel, and these flames are heating the ‘Sushumna’ nerve, also called the ‘Brahma’s door’, the lungs, the heart, the throat etc., all of which have the vital airs in them. By heating the lower end of the ‘Sushumna’ nerve alongside the heating of the ‘Kundalini’ and the ‘Apan wind’, the opening of this nerve is unclogged and the subtle energy trapped inside the coiled ‘Kundalini’ is released and pushed up by the ‘Apan wind’ into the spinal cord, rising right up to the head, mixing with all other winds en-route, collecting all their impurities with it much like the hot air rising above the chimney of a furnace in a factory. It is also like the hot wind rising up from the surface of the earth and developing into a whirl-wind which takes along with it dust particles, leaves, twigs et al. This polluted wind is finally exhaled through the right nostril.

Further, as is the case of a chimney in a factory, the rising of hot air also helps in ventilation of the body because fresh air is drawn in to fill the gap left by the rising Apan wind. In other words, all the vital winds present at different points in the body of the individual, which were hitherto trapped due to bad habits and postures through the person’s

lifetime, are forced out of their entrapments and are circulated throughout the body. Obviously, the diseases caused by incarcerated and trapped polluted wind —called ‘Vayu Dosh’, or affections of the body arising out of faulty winds —are eliminated (Kaushitaki Brahmin Upanishad, 2/113).

The rising of the ‘Kundalini’ is also similar to the rising of mercury in a thermometer. When the bulb is heated, the mercury shoots up. The ‘Kundalini activation’ is described in all the major Upanishads dealing with Yoga, chiefly the following— (a) Yog Chudamani and Jabal Darshan Upanishads of the Sam Veda tradition, (b) Trishikhi Brahmin Upanishad of Shukla Yajur Veda tradition, Dyan Bindu Upanishd, verse no. 66-69, Yog Kundalini (which is specially dedicated to the concept of Kundalini and how to activate it), and Yogshikha Upanishad, Canto 1, verse nos. 85-117 of Krishna Yajur Veda tradition. (c) Shandilya Upanishad of the Atharva Veda tradition, Canto 1, section 4, verse no. 8, 36/1-4; Canto 1, section 7, verse nos. 36/2-5

The *Dyanbindu Upanishad*, verse no. 66-69 of Krishna Yajur Veda tradition describes how to activate and ignite the latent cosmic energy present in the Kundalini. This verse is quoted here—

“Verse no. 66 = The supreme source of divine cosmic energy is personified as a female deity (a Goddess) called the ‘Parmeshwari’. [Here the term refers to the Kundalini¹ because it is the fount of this cosmic dynamic energy in creation inside the body.] This Parmeshwari representing the stupendous source of energy lies in a sleeping state or in a dormant state of existence, blocking the entrance or doorway to the pathway to Brahm realisation (called the ‘Brahm-Dwar’)².

This Parmeshwari is aroused or literally woken up from her sleep by the process of ‘Vahini Yoga’³ or the meditative practice that is tantamount to doing a fire sacrifice in a symbolic way⁴ because it kindles the latent fire element inside the Kundalini. This process is aided by the strong will power of the mind called the Mana, and the proper channelising of the forces of the vital winds called the Maruts present inside the body by doing Pranayam and other exercises of Yoga (66).

[Note—¹Kundalini—The Kundalini is a coil-like center of subtle energy lying at the base of the spine. It is generally lying in a dormant state. By doing Yogic practices, the stupendous energy trapped in its coils can be released by the unplugging of its mouth which opens into the ‘Sushumna’ nerve. This energy then rises up the spinal cord and ultimately reaches the top of the head. The Yogi who practices this Kundalini activation, called ‘Kundalini Jagran’, experiences brilliance and dazzle unmatched by any other experience.

²The Brahm-Dwar is the lower end of the Sushumna Naadi, the tubular duct running through the center of the spine and is regarded as the only duct that helps the expert ascetic to divert his vital winds upwards along with the subtle cosmic energy released from the Kundalini, upwards so that they reach the top of the head where the Brahm-Randhra is located. This Brahm-Randhra is the hair-like slit on the top of the skull from

where the supreme transcendental Brahm is said to have entered the gross body of the creature at the time of creation and had taken up his abode in the creature's mind and intellect in order to control his creation at the gross level and material plane of physical existence from there. According to the philosophy of Yoga, when an acclaimed practitioner of meditation and contemplation is able to concentrate his vital forces of life, i.e. the Pran and Atma, there, he experiences a closeness with this Supreme Being present in a subtle and imperceptible form at this spot. Finally, at the time of death, his Pran makes its exit, along with the Atma, his pure self or consciousness, from this point to merge with the wind or air element present in the vast cosmos outside the physical body. This is tantamount to the aspirant's final liberation and deliverance because then this Pran would not have to reenter any other body as it has merged and got itself lost permanently in the elements of Nature, losing its individuality.

Usually the lower end of this Brahm-Dwar (represented by the Sushumna Naadi) is blocked by the mouth of the Kundalini. The thrust of Yoga practice, especially the Vahini Yoga is to un-block it by opening the Kundalini's mouth and releasing the latter's cosmic energy into this pathway.

Yogchudamani Upanishad, verse no. 36 of Sam Veda tradition describes this pathway.

³Vahini Yoga—It deals with the activation of the vital wind/air with the fire/energy of life. For it, various techniques, processes, postures and exercises have been prescribed in Yoga, the chief among them being the activation of the Kundalini by Pranayam. The 'fire' required to heat and activates the 'Apan' wind and push it upwards comes from the 'Sun Chakra' or the 'Surya Chakra' (subtle energy center) located in the region of the navel. It is done by 'Surya Pranayam'. During this meditative practice, it is imagined that leaping flames are flaring up from the core of the sun symbolically residing in the navel of the Yogi, and these flames are virtually heating the Sushumna nerve (also called the pathway leading to Brahm) as well as the other vital winds present in the lungs, the heart, throat etc. By heating the lower end of the Sushumna nerve, which is akin to heating one end of a heating rod or coil, alongside the heating of the Kundalini and the Apan wind, the opening of this Sushumna nerve, which was up till now blocked, is unclogged and the subtle energy of the coiled Kundalini, which was hereto before trapped inside it, is released and pushed up by the Apan wind into the spinal cord through this Sushumna nerve where it rises up through this channel right up to the mind or the top of the head, mixing with it all other winds en-route, collecting all their impurities with it, much like the hot air above the surface of the earth developing into whirlwind and rising up into the atmosphere, taking up along with it the dust particles, dry leaves, twigs etc. as it goes up. This polluted wind is finally exhaled through the right and left nostrils during the process of Rechak. The rising of the Kundalini is similar to the rising of heated mercury in a thermometer. When the bulb is heated, the mercury shoots up. Here, when the Kundalini is heated, the energy trapped inside it rises up the Sushumna nerve.

Vahini Yoga is so-called because it stokes the latent fire energy lying dormant hitherto in the body of the spiritual aspirant by activating the vital winds, especially the warm Apan wind present in the lower end of the intestines, and utilizing its powerful force to

stoke and activate the Kundalini, thereby heating it and releasing its subtle energy through the opening of its mouth covering the lower end of the Sushumna Naadi (nerve). This released energy then snakes up this Naadi and reaches the head, first at the root of the nose and center of the eyebrows and ultimately the top of the head at the point of the Brahm Randhra, the hair like slit on the skull, from which is finally escapes at the time of death of the ascetic, giving him liberation from the fetter of this body for ever. (Refer Yogchudamani Upanishad, verse no. 38 and 107 of Sam Veda tradition.)

⁴The Yogchudamani Upanishad, verse no. 36-39 of Sam Veda tradition has an identical view which says—

“Verse no. 36—The ‘Kundalini energy’ is located above/at the top of the ‘Kanda’ in the form of a coil having eight spirals. It covers the mouth of ‘Brahm-Dwar’ (literally, the doorway leading to Brahm). It remains ever present, but dormant, in that place.

“Verse no. 37—The stupendously supreme, Goddess-like divine and sublime cosmic energy (i.e. Kundalini) remains dormant and in a sleeping state. It keeps the door or the entrance point of the channel leading to Brahm residing in the ‘Mana’ of a creature (the Brahm which lives in the realms of the mind and the intellect, the heart and the soul of the creature) blocked or closed or choked by its own mouth. This entrance point is called ‘Brahma’s doorway’, which is actually the opening of the ‘Sushumna’ nerve. [The coil of Kundalini is like a serpent, with its hood blocking the lower end of the spinal cord like a plug in the neck of a bottle.]

“Verse no. 38—By the practice of ‘Vahini Yoga’ (literally, the ‘fire Yoga’) it becomes activated. Simply put, the ‘fuse’ is ignited by the subtle fire produced or kindled or stoked by Yoga to make this energy active and viable. Once activated, it assumes the form of ‘light’, and accompanied by (or pushed by or impelled by) a determined mind as well as the forceful push of the vital winds, it gradually snakes up or rises up the ‘Sushumna’ nerve (like a flexible needle snaking up the intestine or veins during a micro-hole surgery as done during endoscopy by a doctor).

“Verse no. 39—Even as a person can open the locks of the door to his house with a key, Yogis can open the door to liberation and deliverance, emancipation and salvation by the use of this Kundalini.

To understand the phenomenon, one can imagine a flexible probe or scope passing up one’s rectum during a medical process called endoscopy. The rectum and the lower intestine have a titillating experience as a result of the probe moving inside it. The entire process has been elaborately described in a note to verse no. 107 of this Upanishad.]

“Verse no. 67-68 = Upon being woken up, this Parmeshwari (i.e. the cosmic dynamic energy trapped in the Kundalini but now released in its subtle and sublime form) rises up and moves upwards the Sushumna path (i.e. this energy snakes up the Naadi called Sushumna), taking along with her the Mana (subtle mind) and the Pran (the vital wind forces in the body representing the spark of life and vitality that makes the creature move about and show signs of life) just like the needle takes the thread passing through it upwards when it is moved in that direction by the hand while sewing a cloth.

Wise, erudite and expert ascetics diligently and forcefully open the door leading to their liberation and deliverance from the fetters that shackle them to this body by releasing the trapped energy of the Kundalini just like a man opens a magical trapdoor of some mysterious citadel by clapping or knocking at it to summon the person inside the citadel to open the door for him¹ (67-68).

[Note—¹True form of liberation and deliverance for an enlightened ascetic implies the release of the ‘Pran’, i.e. the vital winds present in the body which are synonymous with ‘life’ in a creature, from the trap-like physical gross body upon its exit from the latter, and its merger with the primary air or wind element that is present outside the body, followed by the disintegration of the body and release of the other elements such as earth, water, fire and sky, which were an integral constituent parts of the gross body, into their primary cosmic forms. This ensures that there would be no more vestiges of the earlier body left, and the dissolution is complete and final. Refer Yog Kundali Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda tradition.

“Verse no. 69 = The person desirous of activating the Kundalini and releasing its subtle energy for his spiritual benefit as well as to empower him with great mystical and occult powers should sit steadily in the Padmasan posture¹. The palms of the two hands are placed one on the top of the other, face upwards and put on the heels of the two legs (which have already been folded in from the knee joint in such a way that the heels are just opposite the navel, the sole is pointed upwards and inwards towards the body, and the toes of the leg of left side rest on the thigh of the right side and of the right leg on the thigh of the left side). The chin is drawn in and held tightly near the pit of the throat below the Adam’s apple.

While sitting in this posture, the practitioner should focus his mind on the patron deity of ascetics, usually on Lord Shiva who is regarded as the supreme Brahman manifested in the form of the ‘pure self’. The Apaan Vayu (i.e. the wind in the lower part of the body, especially in the lower intestines and pelvic region) is drawn or pulled upwards, while at the same time the Pran Vayu (i.e. the breath moving in the upper part of the body, especially in the nostrils and lungs) is made to divert inwards or held from escaping. [This physical exercise is very difficult and requires a lot of practice and patience. It results in mixing these two primary winds in the body. This is effectuated when the Apaan wind is pulled up by the upwards tug of the Pran wind, and the latter is pushed down by the downwards pull of the former, resulting in a balancing effect.]

The net result of this exercise is that the practitioner is able to experience the astounding potentials of the released powers of the trapped subtle cosmic energy that was hitherto lying dormant in a hibernating state in the Kundalini. [When the two winds cross each other’s path, they create enough force that shakes and rattles the Kundalini into activity, thereby unplugging its mouth to release the energy trapped inside its coils. This is like doing physical exercises in a gymnasium to loosen rigid muscles and tone them up.] (69).

[Note—¹The Padmasan posture is to sit in a lotus posture. This entails to sit crossed-legged in such a way that the foot of the left leg rests at the base of the thigh of the right side and the heel is just in front of the navel. Similarly, the right leg is drawn in and the foot is placed at the base of the thigh of the left leg and the heel is in front of the navel. The toes of each leg rest upon the thigh of the other side and the sole points upwards. The spine, neck and head are held in a ram-rod straight position, and the hands, with palms facing upwards and resting one on the top of the other, are placed on the folded legs in front of the navel region. The chin is drawn in and held tightly near the base of the Adam's apple near the chest. This Aasan has been described in Trishikhi Brahmin Upanishad, Canto 2, verse no. 39 of the Shukla Yajur Veda tradition.]”

An entire Upanishad of the Krishna Yajur Veda tradition, viz. the *Yog Kundalini Upanishad*, which is the 27th Upanishad of this Veda is exclusively dedicated to the concept of the Kundalini and the detailed process of its activation along with the spiritual benefits derived by this awakening.

Besides the above, there are two more Upanishads of this Veda that deal with this concept of the Kundalini--viz. the *Yogshikha Upanishad* Canto 1, verse nos. 82-89; *Yogtattva Upanishad*, verse nos. 81-84.

Now let us see what the *Yogshikha Upanishad*, Canto 1, verse nos. 82-89 has to say on the subject—

“Verse no. 82 = By carefully learning the process of activating the vital energies trapped inside the body from the wise and erudite Guru (teacher of Yoga), the aspirant should forcefully make relevant efforts to control the vital winds.

The Kundalini is a coiled subtle energy center having three and a half loops in the coil. It becomes straightened as a result of the process mentioned here (by which the vital winds are controlled and the latent energies are activated). [This process releases the trapped energy in the Kundalini.] (82).

“Verse no. 83 = The anus should be constricted (so that the Apaan wind does not escape through it during the pressure to be exerted for activating and straightening of the Kundalini) and the Kundalini should be jerked so that it is activated into life¹.

If the aspirant is successful in doing so, i.e. if he is able to activate the Kundalini and harness its stupendous treasury of cosmic energy that lies latent in it in a dormant form, he is able to symbolically conquer death; he would have no fear from death. [This is because for one, he would have all his organs under his control, his body would be very healthy and toned up, he would not have to suffer from numerous ailments that afflict the body and which cause insurmountable torments for an ordinary man, and should he decide to finally discard the body and free himself from its limitations he would easily channelise all his vital winds up through the Sushumna Naadi with the aid of energy provided by the Kundalini and make his painless exit

by rupturing the Brahm Randhra at the top of the head. He would not have to suffer the normal horrors of a declining body and the final moments of death.] (83).

[Note—¹This phenomenon is like uncoiling a hose pipe full of very cold water during winters. The water and the pipe have been lying under frigid conditions for a long time and the pipe needs some amount of warming and vigorous shaking to uncoil it and releasing its water content. In the present case, the Kundalini is the subtle energy center or the body placed at the lower end of the spine. Its mouth is closed by the Sushumna Naadi. The Kundalini is compared to a serpent whose mouth is shut by this Naadi. When the serpent is shaken and jerked into life, the hot breath of it would melt the clogging wax in its mouth and release the venomous gases trapped in this snake's elongated body. When the anus is shut tight, the heat in the lower bowls and abdomen create sufficient energy that would unclog the Kundalini and melt the wax sealing its mouth, thereby releasing its hitherto trapped energy which would then snake up the only opening available to it, i.e. the tubular Sushumna Naadi. This released energy snakes up through this Naadi and reaches the other end of it at the top of the head (skull) in the area of the Brahm Randhra (the cranium).

The process of activating the Kundalini has been elaborately described in the book 'The Serpent Power' by Arthur Avalon & Sir John Woodroffe.

According to the *Yogchudamani Upanishad*, verse no. 36 of Sam Veda tradition, the energy of the Kundalini is located above/at the top of the 'Kanda' in the form of a coil having eight spirals. It covers the mouth of 'Brahma Dwar' (literally, the doorway leading to Brahma). It remains ever present, but dormant, in that place.

The *Dyanbindu Upanishad*, verse no. 69 of Krishna Yajur Veda tradition describes how to activate and ignite the latent cosmic energy present in the Kundalini.

The benefits of activating the Kundalini and the process do so have been succinctly described in Krishna Yajur Veda's *Yogtattva Upanishad*, verse nos. 81-84.]

"Verse no. 84 = This is very esoteric and secret knowledge that I have divulged to you in brief. One should sit in the Vajra Aasan¹ and constrict the upper part of the body. [That is, he should control the Pran or breath from escaping like the Apaana wind was restricted by closing the anus in verse no. 83 above.] (84).

[Note—¹The Vajra Aasan is the following—the body is curved or arched backwards like a bow in such a way that the head touches the upturned soles of the feet. To give effect to this Aasan, one should sit on the ground with the two legs bent backwards from the knee and the soles pointing upwards behind the buttocks. The upper part of the body is slowly bent backwards until the rear of the head touches the upturned soles from behind. This posture is called Vajra after the weapon of the same name held by Indra, the king of Gods, which gives him invincibility in the entire creation. In other words, the practitioner of Vajra Aasan too acquires such great powers that he too becomes invincible.]

“Verse no. 85 = The fire needs air to remain kindled, and that is why when one is able to control and harness the vital winds and concentrate their energy on the Kundalini, the subtle energy present in the latter remains perpetually active; it is not allowed to subside and get doused; it is not allowed to flicker and die away.

The Kundalini has immense energy inside it. The intensity of it is so powerful that it can effectively conquer all the three worlds¹ (85).

[Note—¹Here the term conquering of the three worlds have two connotations—(a) The three states in which the consciousness exists—i.e. the waking state called the Jagrat, the dreaming state called the Swapna, and deep sleep state called the Sushupta. This happens for the following reasons. (i) By controlling his sense organs during the waking state of consciousness, he has literally vanquished the material world which is the focus of attention of these organs; this world no longer disturbs him. (ii) Next, since he has controlled the mind and its sub-conscious, he remains free from their influence during the dreaming state. Since the dreams are the result of the sub-conscious mind at work and the latter has already been conquered, there is no question of his mind creating a world of dreams which he would not like to exist, or which is not according to his temperament. The mind would not dream dreams that the ascetic would not like to dream of. In other words, he has controlled the wayward mind and through it his dreams, because dreams are the playfield of the mind and the sub-conscious. (iii) When he has been able to conquer the first two states and crossed into the third state of consciousness, called the deep sleep state, both the gross body and the subtle mind are non-existent; they have no role to play now. But under ordinary circumstances, this state is very temporary for the man in a deep sleep state reverts back to the earlier two stages when the time comes for him to wake up to the realities of this material world where he lives. When it happens, the temporary bliss that he had obtained during the deep sleep state vanishes in thin air. But in the case of a realised and expert ascetic this does not happen for he remains perpetually in a state of bliss and oblivion, unconcerned with this artificial world of material objects driven by the mind and the intellect. In other words, he has crossed this third state by conquering it to proceed to the fourth state called Turiya, a state of perpetual bliss and happiness.

This is a metaphoric way of saying that an ascetic who is able to harness the energy of the Kunkalini by practicing Yoga has conquered the three worlds by not only controlling himself in his waking state by self restraint of his sense organs, but also controlling his world of dreams by controlling the sub-conscious mind, and then the higher existential state of consciousness called deep sleep. That is, he is in total control of his self and is like an emperor who is invincible for his enemies, the latter being the uncountable worldly detractions and inherent faults of character created by various Gunas that tend to mar his spiritual progress.

(b) The other interpretation of the term ‘three worlds’ refer to the stupendous mystical powers called the Siddhis (of which there are eight in number) that he gets by being successful in Yoga. Armed with these Siddhis, he can perform super-human tasks and achieve success in doing things that a normal emperor’s army is unable to do. He can

go anywhere he likes in the three worlds consisting of the terrestrial world where humans live, the nether world where subterranean creatures live, and the celestial world of Gods and Spirits. He can assume any form there, defeat even the strongest of enemies and the fiercest of animals, and even defeat death itself which is otherwise undefeatable. (Refer Yogtattva Upanishad, verse nos. 51, 73-75, 59-60 in this context which explicitly state this fact.)]

“Verse no. 86 = When the subtle energy of the Kundalini is stoked by the concentrated vital winds present inside the body (by doing various Aasans and as described in verse nos. 82-84), it rises up and snakes up the Sushumna Naadi. [This Naadi is the tubular duct whose lower end opens into the mouth of the Kundalini. So when the mouth is unclogged by heating the Kundalini by Apaana wind, the energy thus released naturally would enter this tubular duct.]

It is metaphorically said that it has entered the Chandra Mandal, i.e. the realm of the moon because the entrance of the vital winds and the energy into the Sushumna Naadi causes a sense of titillation and ecstasy for the ascetic. Such emotional feelings as ecstasy, exhilaration, elation and joyousness are associated with the Moon God.

It is said that now it pierces through the Brahm Granthi¹ (86).

[Note—¹The word ‘Granthi’ means a knot. Just like a knot binds something, these Granthis of the body bind the subtle energy present in the body from being released. According to Tantra literature, there are three Granthis—viz. Brahm Granthi, Vishnu Granthi and Rudra Granthi. They obstruct the upwards movement of the energy or power of the Kundalini. Each of the six Chakras (whirling energy centers of the body) has two Granthis on either side. The Brahm Granthi is situated between the Muladhara Chakra and Swadisthan Chakra.]

“Verse no. 87 = Then the energy of the Kundalini pierces through the Vishnu Granthi¹ and establishes itself in the Rudra Granthi². At this stage, the aspirant should practice the Kumbhak phase of Pranayam³ repeatedly and replenish the strength of the vital winds present inside the body. [This is made possible because the inhaled air which is rich in oxygen is first sucked in through the nostrils during the Puraka phase of Pranayam. It is then allowed to stay inside the body for some time during the Kumbhak phase of Pranayam to enable it to oxidise all the tissues and remote corners of the body besides rejuvenating the vital winds of the body. The toxic gases which were earlier trapped inside the different parts of the body have been yanked out due to the heating of the body by Pranayam, activating the Kundalini and holding the Apaana wind from escaping from the anus by closing the latter. These toxic gases, such as carbon dioxide etc, are then collected and exhaled during the Rechaka phase of Pranayam.] (87).

[Note—¹The Vishnu Granthi is situated between Manipura and Anahata Chakras.

²The Rudra Granthi is located between Vishuddha Chakra and Agya (Gyan) Chakra. The energy or cosmic divine powers of the Kundalini has to pierce through these three knots before it can reach the Sahasraara Chakra at the top of the head.

³The word Pranayam refers to control of the breath and Kumbhak is the phase of Pranayam when the inhaled air is held inside the body for a certain pre-fixed time before being exhaled.]

“Verse no. 88 = The aspirant should then practice the piercing of the ‘Surya Mandal’ or the realm of the subtle sun in the body. By doing this successfully he finds peace, calmness and fulfillment. This is effected by doing the Kumbhak phase of Pranayam four times. [This is a reference to the fact Kumbhak would have resulted in his body becoming light as all the toxic gases are by now eliminated and all the tissues are well oxidised and charged. The body feels rejuvenated and fresh.] (88).

“Verse no. 89 = Having pierced through the three knots (as mentioned in verse no. 86-87) which had been acting as a millstone around his neck, tying him down and preventing the stupendous divine energy of the Kundalini from reaching the Brahm Randhra, the aspirant is now freed from all fetters and becomes eligible to attain Brahm. [That is, now he can enjoy the extreme bliss and happiness which comes with self-realisation and Brahm-realisation.]”

The *Yog Kundalini Upanishad* of the Krishna Yajur Veda, in its Canto 1, gives a detailed account of how the Kundalini is activated. For example, verse nos. 42-46 describes how the Kundalini is activated by doing Mool Bandha and how it then enters the Sushumna Naadi in a very brief and succinct manner. To quote—

“Verse no. 42 = [This verse describes the Mool Bandha which heats and diverts the Apan wind into the Kundalini.]

Mool Bandha involves the constriction of the anus and diverting upwards forcefully the Apan Vayu¹ which is naturally present in the lower part of the body and which has a natural tendency of moving downwards and out of the anus (42).

[Note—¹The Apan wind is the one that is present in the intestines and moves down and out through the aperture of the anus. It is responsible for movement of the food downwards in the intestines and expulsion of the waste from the body through the anus. When the anus is constricted and shut closed then when this wind is heated and pressure is exerted on it during the course of Pranayam, it gets would forcefully move upwards. Finding no other opening except the lower end of the spinal cord, or the Sushumna Naadi, it would force its way in it and then snake upwards. This procedure is called Mool Bandha—literally ‘closing of the root’, so named because the Mool Kand, the carrot-like knot of Naadis which form the base or foundation of the body, is located in the region of the anus and the genitals.

The Tejobindu Upanishad, Canto 1, verse nos. 27 of Krishna Yajur Veda describes Mool Bandha as follows—”The ‘Moolbandh’ is closing of that spot in the body which is

like the base or foundation for all living beings. It is possible to control the mind and its attention by controlling this Mool or root, which can be done by closing it or doing the Moolbandh. Those who are well versed in the philosophy pertaining to meditation as a tool of Brahm-realisation should be very particular about it (as it helps them to control their mind and its faculties)”.

The word ‘Mool’ means the origin or basis of anything, and ‘bandh’ means to stop or close. The Moolbandh is done by pressing the genitals with the heels and constricting the muscles of the anus to close this opening. Meanwhile, the Apaana Vayu (the wind present in the rectum and anus region) is pulled upwards forcefully. It is described in Dhyānbindu Upanishad, verse no. 73-74^{1/2} of Krishna Yajur Veda, as well as in Yogchudamani Upanishad, verse no. 46 of Sam Veda tradition.]

“Verse nos. 43-45 = [These three verses describe how the Kundalini is activated.]

When this restricted Apaana wind (whose natural movement downwards and out through the anus is restricted by the latter’s closure by doing Mool Bandha) begins its movement upwards, it comes in contact with the fount or the pit of fire (located in the Kundalini and the rest of the sac-like lower abdomen). This hitherto dormant fire is now stoked by this wind/air which begins to swirl around the lower part of the body, thereby rekindling the dormant fire; it begins to burn with renewed vigour and energy [43].

When the Pran (literally ‘the combined life-giving vital wind forces in the body’) is heated and stirred into activity by the combined affect of the fire element present in the body and the diverted Apaana wind¹, it is able to burn all the impurities that have accumulated in the body. [It acts like the blast furnace which burns all things put into it.] [44].

The result of this natural heating process is that the dormant Kundalini is shaken up and stirred into activity much like a sleeping snake being prodded by a heated stick. It then hisses and becomes straightened like that snake [45]. (43-45).

[Note—¹It is to be noted here that this Mool Bandha is done in combination with the Kumbhak phase of Pranayam. When the air is held inside the body during Kumbhak it is natural for it to get heated by the latent heat present inside the body. This is a natural process, especially when Pranayam is done for a prolonged period and the exhalation and inhalation are done rapidly as described in verse no. 34 above.]

“Verse no. 46 = [This verse describes how the activated energy of the Kundalini enters the Sushumna Naadi.]

When heated, the energy present in the Kundalini now expands and enters the lower end of the Sushumna Naadi (which had hitherto closed the mouth of the Kundalini by plugging it with its lower end) much like the awakened snake slithering into a cave.

That is why it is ordained upon ascetics that they practice Mool Bandh regularly (46).”

The same idea is repeated in Canto 1, verse nos. 64-66 of the same *Yog Kundalini Upanishad*. To quote—

“Verse no. 64 = The process whereby the anus is closed to divert the Apaana wind upwards is called Mool Bandha. This enables the Apaana wind to get heated and accompanied by the energy of the latent fire energy present in the body it begins to move upwards.”

“Verse nos. 65-66 = When the Pran is also heated it combines with the Apaana to become one ‘activated Pran’. [That is, the artificial distinction between Pran, the breath residing primarily in the upper part of the body, and Apaana, the wind in the intestine and primarily residing in the lower part of the body, is removed when they are heated. Actually air is one and immutable element, and the distinction is made on the basis of their functions and locations. The Pran is located in the upper part of the body and is the term applied to the air moving in and out of the body through the nose and mouth. On the other hand, Apaana is the wind moving down the intestines and out through the anus. When the nose and mouth along with the throat are closed during the Kumbhak phase of Pranayam, especially done with the Jalandhar Bandha, and it is accompanied with the closing of the anus by doing the Mool Bandha, it is natural that the Pran and the Apaana get trapped inside the sac-like abdomen. This not only heats them but enables their mixing. Thus the artificial distinction is removed and the combined duo is known hereafter by a single name of ‘Pran’.]

The accumulated heat (caused by trapping of the winds inside the body and the closing of the mouth, the nose, the throat and the anus) and the agitated winds have exert a combined pressure on the Kundalini, the coiled energy center at the base of the spine, resulting in its uncoiling and getting straightened. It then enters the mouth of the Sushumna Naadi which lies just at one end of the Kundalini. [The Sushumna Naadi emerges from the center of the spinal cord and blocks one end of the Kundalini facing the lower end of the spinal cord. So when the Kundalini is heated, it straightens and subtly wriggles itself into this Sushumna Naadi just like a snake slithering into its hole.]”

The *Shandilya Upanishad* of the Atharva Veda, Canto 1, section 4, verse no. 8 describes the Kundalini as follows--“The region of the Kundalini lies below the navel and above the groins. The Kundalini has eight coils, and together they represent eight sorts of characteristics or inherent nature exhibited by the Kundalini.

[The Kundalini is a coiled subtle energy centre of the body that lies at the base of the spine, called the Mooladhar Chakra—or the whirling energy center that forms the base of the body. The Kundalini blocks the lower end of the spinal cord by one of its ends. When it is aroused or activated during Yoga, it is heated, and its trapped energy is released into the Sushumna Naadi, the central duct passing through the spinal cord. This energy is also called the Kundalini and it passes through the various Chakras en-route to the top of the head. While doing so, all the Chakras are opened like a bud opening under pressure. When the energy of the Kundalini reaches the top the head, the practitioner experiences extreme sense of ecstasy, called the exhilaration of self-realisation when he feels extremely blissful and contented. Usually, the energy would revert back to its original position when the ascetic wakes up from

his meditation session, but with sustained practice the Kundalini can be trained to remain perpetually whirling in the top of the head, i.e. in the Shasraar Chakra which is like a wheel having a thousand spokes. { ‘Sahastra = a thousand; Ara = spokes of the wheel; Chakra = wheel. } According to the Tantra philosophy it is like a lotus with a thousand petals. In Yogic parlance, when the Kundalini is stationed in this region of the head, the practitioner of Yoga is said to live in a state of Samadhi—i.e. a state of trance when he experiences bliss and contentedness, and is unaware of anything, including his own body. From practical angle this is because the nerves of the brain are subject to subtle vibrations which have the effect of massaging and titillating them. Refer verse no. 10 below. A separate appendix dealing with Naadis and related concepts describes the Kundalini as well.]

This Kundalini lies in a dormant state at the base of the spine (in the region of the body called the Mooladhar Chakra). During Yoga involving various meditation exercises, the vital winds called the Pran and the fire element present inside the body are systematically controlled and harnessed. This results in the food (nutrients) and water (the fluid components of the body in which the food is dissolved—e.g. the blood, mucous, various enzymes and hormones etc.) present in the body too being regulated properly. The vital winds spread uniformly inside the body, and the fire element is also equally distributed. In other words, the entire internal apparatus of the body is brought under control.

It is then that sufficient energy is generated and the vital wind called the Apaana Vayu (which is present in the lower end of the body to help downward movement of the food in the intestines, its digestion and its final excretion, as well as in the mouth to help imbibe food and water), which is heated by the regulated fire element, enters the Kundalini. This helps to establish a seamless link between the Apaana Vayu that is present in the mouth and the one that is present in the lower end of the body.

The Apaana Vayu rises up along with the Kundalini from the back of the body (because the energy of the Kundalini rises up through the Sushumna Naadi which is present in the spinal cord which itself lies along the backbone) to reach the mouth, and finally goes right up to the top of the head to reach the Brahm-Randhra.

[The Brahm-Randhra is a hair-like slit in the skull on the top of the head. At the height of Yoga, the energy of the Kundalini is thrust out of the body through this slit by the heated and pressurized Apaana Vayu. According to Yoga philosophy, this is how the ascetic leaves his body to find Mukti or liberation and deliverance from all fetters represented by the gross body and its organs. Refer verse no. 10 below.]

The glorious and divine radiance of the Kundalini is revealed in the form of a subtle and sublime entity that is radiant and splendorous, and that majestically resides in the subtle space of the heart called the ‘Hridaya Akash’.

[This entity is the Atma or the pure consciousness which is self-illuminated and shines in the subtle heart much like the celestial sun which shines in the sky. The allegory here serves to highlight the fact that the Kundalini has the same energy and importance as the sun, and just

like a wise man can utilize the sun's light, heat and energy for his all round benefit, the energy and the potentials of the Kundalini too can be utilized by a wise aspirant for his spiritual welfare. Another purpose is to emphasize that the Atma is as splendorous and radiant as the Kundalini and the sun, but like in the case of the Kundalini which needs to be activated to be of any good for the aspirant, the Atma too needs to be properly cultivated and realised to be of any spiritual good of the aspirant. Otherwise, both the Kundalini and the Atma would remain neglected and dormant in the body while the person continues to suffer from all sorts of spiritual ailments. It would be an ironical situation wherein gold lies hidden inside the house while a man suffers from financial problems.] (8)."

The *Shandilya Upanishad* of the Atharva Veda, Canto 1, section 7, verse nos. 36/2-5 describes how the Kundalini is activated and its benefits as follows--

"Verse no. 36/2 = The aspiring ascetic should constrict the Kundalini and pull it upwards. This would open the hitherto-closed door for his Moksha (liberation and deliverance).

[This refers to the activation of the Kundalini and opening of the clogged Naadis in the body. The Kundalini is a coiled subtle cosmic energy center of the body that lies at the lower end of the spinal cord, blocking it with one of its ends. The subtle energy of the Kundalini represents the dynamism of the consciousness present in the body of the living being. The Naadi is the general term used for all the tubular ducts present inside the body through which all the life sustaining energy and impulses flow in the body. During Yoga, when the vital winds are heated and activated, they shake the Kundalini and loosen it up. Then they push up through the Kundalini which opens the blocked mouth of the Sushumna Naadi, the main nerve of the spinal cord, and snakes up it to finally reach the top of the head.

The combined force of the vital winds and the dynamic energy of the Kundalini opens the various Granthis (knots) and Chakras (subtle energy centers of the body lying between the lower end of the body and the top of the head) en-route to the top of the head. With these openings, a burst of immense spiritual energy is experienced by the ascetic. The Pran or life-consciousness reaches the top of the head, and when all the conditions are favourable and enough pressure is built up, it finally escapes out of the body through the Brahm-Randhra, the hair-like slit present on the top of the skull. It is called 'Moksha' because the Atma, the consciousness present in the gross body of the ascetic, finds its permanent freedom by breaking free from the fetters of the gross body and escaping into the vast fathomless sky much like a caged bird finding its freedom when it escapes through the trap-door of the cage.

It is called 'Moksha' also because it is the final escape of the consciousness along with the vital winds or Pran which, having escaped from the confines of the gross body through the Brahm-Randhra, merges with the cosmic wind or the air element present outside the body to become one and inseparable from it. The 'Pran' will no longer re-enter the body—meaning its liberation is once and for all; it is its final freedom from confinements and limitations which are against its natural temperament and habit.

The Atma, which is the 'true self' of all living beings and is pure consciousness, is also a synonym of Pran, along with the vital wind and other life-factors in creation which are generally regarded as Pran of a creature, as both the terms mean 'life'. Hence, when it is said that the 'Pran' escapes from limitations or confines of the gross body to enlarge and expand to cover the whole space of the sky once it comes out into the open sky outside, it is implied that the Atma—the 'self' of the ascetic—too has found its Moksha.

Prior to this final freedom, when the Pran had reached the area of the forehead between the two eyebrows en-route to the Brahm-Randhra the aspirant is able to experience a thrilling sensation which gives the aspirant extreme bliss and ecstasy. This is the moment of self-realisation when the ascetic experiences the bliss that is associated with being near and close to the cosmic source of beatitude and felicity called Brahm. This experience is a fore-runner and acts as a prelude for the final bliss, beatitude and felicity that awaits him when his Pran would escape from the Brahm-Randhra to give him freedom from all his agonies and torments.] (36/2).

"Verse no. 36/3 = The Kundalini lies in a dormant or sleeping state by covering and blocking the mouth of the path (i.e. the Sushumna Naadi) through which it would have to finally move out in the aspirant's ultimate quest for Moksha, or spiritual liberation and deliverance, emancipation and salvation.

The Kundalini wraps around this path like a serpent coiled around a tube, tightly clasping it in its embrace and blocking its opening with its hood.

[As stated in verse no. 36/2, the Kundalini represents the dynamic aspect of the consciousness present in the body of the creature. Normally for the un-initiated creature it is lying in a 'sleeping state' which is a metaphoric way of saying that the ignorant creature is unable to know or recognize his true astounding potentials. He does not know that a mighty source of spiritual and mystical power is hidden inside his own body much like the musk hidden in the belly of the musk-deer. It only requires igniting and then nothing would be beyond reach. This ignorance is the reason why the creature is always under pain and suffers from this or that agony; this is the reason why he feels that he is powerless and crippled; this is the cause of his fetters and bondages to this world and the body; this is why he needs the prop of various rituals and doing so many things in order to find ways to free himself from the shackle of this body and the world.

But once enlightenment and awareness dawns upon him he realises that should he fire up this Kundalini by means of the process described in the Upanishads, his deliverance and freedom is certain and within his reach. This ignorance of one's spiritual potentials is metaphorically called the 'sleeping Kundalini', while its removal and the dawn of enlightenment and awareness of one's inherent spiritual strength is called the 'rising of the dormant spiritual energy' in the form of the awakened Kundalini.

The Kundalini is visualized in the form of a snake that lies coiled when asleep. When it is coaxed with a stick it rises up and holds its hood to hiss violently. The same thing happens with the Kundalini. When it is coaxed with the heated vital winds during the process of Yoga that is especially designed to activate the Kundalini, the latter is shaken and stirred. It stands up like a snake holding its hood high and hissing. The heat and the pressure exerted by the vital winds help to push the energy of the Kundalini into the Sushumna Naadi. This is called the opening of the pathway to Brahm because this Naadi leads up right up to the top of the head where the ascetic experiences the bliss of Brahm-realisation.] (36/3).

"Verse no. 36/4 = An ascetic who practices regularly to make the Kundalini activated, and keep it activated, is able to attain Mukti (liberation and deliverance as narrated above).

If the Kundalini (i.e. the subtle cosmic energy that is present inside the body as the dynamism of pure consciousness) rests in the area above the throat, the ascetic is able to find Mukti. Such an aspirant finds enlightenment and self-realisation.

On the other hand, if the Kundalini remains below the throat the aspirant remains mired in ignorance and delusions. Such a man remains trapped and bonded in fetters of ignorance. He cannot find freedom from his spiritual shackles.

[In other words, if the ascetic is able to focus his attention in the forehead and contemplate upon the supreme consciousness that is a fount of extreme bliss and happiness, he finds liberation and deliverance from the uncountable torments and agonies that are inherent to this gross world. This is because he would have reached the sublime state of self-realisation; he would have risen above the mundane world and meditate on the sublime consciousness by focusing his mind on higher goals of life symbolized by the upper part of the body above the throat, as it is 'head' or 'chief' area of the body where the commanding centre called the brain is situated. He is able to attain enlightenment and self-realisation.

On the other hand, if he remains mired in the lowly affairs of the gross world as symbolized by the attention being focused in the lower part of the body below the throat, the aspirant is deemed to be living in a spiritual void surrounded by delusions and ignorance. Such a man would be more concerned with filling his stomach, looking after the needs of his body and enjoying the pleasures of the sense organs rather than pursuing anything of higher value in spiritual terms. The enlightened man on the other hand would be least bothered about the grosser aspects of creation represented by the lower part of the gross body, and more concerned with noble and auspicious thoughts and pursuance of sublime goals of life symbolized by the upper part or the head where the brain is located. It is here that Brahm is said to have his symbolic abode in the body of the creature.] (36/4).

"Verse no. 36/5 = The Kundalini energy rises up and arrives at the head through the Sushumna Naadi instead of the other two paths open to it, i.e. the Ida and the Pingla Naadis. Therefore,

the Sushumna Naadi is the one that takes the aspirant to the divine and supreme abode of Lord Vishnu.

[The Sushumna Naadi goes right up to the top of the skull, while the other two Naadis stop much below it. Refer verse no. 11 of section 4 of this Canto no. 1. It is in the region of the head that the supreme transcendental Brahm is said to have his abode. Lord Vishnu is none other than Brahm personified. So, since the Sushumna Naadi helps the ascetic in his 'self' realisation and Brahm realisation, it is said to be the pathway that leads one to the divine abode of Lord Vishnu. This is why the Sushumna Naadi is also called the Vishnu Naadi as well as the Brahm Naadi.

Besides this, meditation and contemplation are exercises that require intense concentration of the mind and intellect. When the combined efforts of the mind-intellect lead to self-realisation and experiencing of bliss, it is most convincing for the ascetic. This is true enlightenment as it does not require further testing and proving. It is a sublime state of consciousness that is a metaphor for Brahm-realisation.] (36/5). "

(C) (2) The Shape of the Kundalini and how the latent fire element in the body is kindled has been described in the *Yog Kundalini Upanishad*, Canto 1, verse nos. 82-84, while the divine **feeling of extreme bliss and ecstasy** that is experienced upon self-realisation and awareness of the presence of consciousness in one's own bosom at the culmination of this process of Yoga has been narrated in verse nos. 85-87 of this Upanishad. To quote—

“Verse nos. 82-84 = The Kundalini is like the coiled stem of the lotus flower, while the Mool Kand (the clot of Naadis at the base of the spinal cord) is like the bulbous root of the same lotus. Much like a snake coiled in such a way that the end of its tail is inside its mouth, this Kundalini lies with its mouth covered by the Brahm Randhra Naadi¹ [82 ½].

To awaken this Kundalini, the aspirant is to sit in a Padmasan posture, constrict and pull up the anus, do Kumbhak (holding of the breath during Pranayam), divert the vital wind (i.e. the Apaana wind) of the body upwards and make it strike the Swadisthan Chakra² so that the dormant fire element in the body is ignited³ [84]. (82-84).

[Note—¹This Brahm Randhra Naadi is the Sushumna Naadi—so called because it goes right up to the top of the head where the Brahm Randhra, the hair-like slit in the skull, is located, and through which the vital winds find their way out when an expert ascetic wishes to leave the body at the time of his death. In other words, the lower end of the Sushumna Naadi blocks the opening of the Kundalini like a cork on a bottle.

²The Swadisthan Chakra is the swirling subtle energy center of the body located in the region of the groins of males and the Bhug area of females. It has a 5-headed male phallus like a sprouting seed and its counterpart in the female is the clitoris.

³In essence this verse means that when the Apaana wind is restricted by doing Mool Bandha involving the closing of the anus along with Jalandhar Bandha when the throat is closed and constricting of the muscles of the abdomen during Uddiyan Bandha, an

immense amount of pressure is exerted on the Apan wind. It buffets the Swadisthan Chakra which is like blowing of air in the lower end of the furnace. This would obviously stoke the fire energy present in a dormant form in the Kundalini. This situation is like the lighting of the fire in an oven. When air is blown into the ovens from the lower end, the firewood placed on the grate catches fire easily and burns vigorously.]

“Verse nos. 85-86 = By this method the sleeping or dormant Kundalini is awakened or shaken up and made active. The subtle cosmic energy present in it is then unleashed and it rises up to pierce through the three Granthis, viz. the Brahm Granthi, the Rudra Granthi and the Vishnu Granthi¹, besides piercing through the six Chakras² and reach Sahastraar Chakra symbolically depicted in the form of a subtle lotus with a thousand petals present in the top of the head, i.e. the Brahm Randhra which is located at the top of the head just below the cranium.

At this point of Yoga one experiences a glorious spray of extreme bliss and ecstasy drenching him from all side, which metaphorically represents the union of the divine Shakti with the eternal fount of truthfulness, bliss and joyous abandon called Shiva. [Here, the ‘Shakti’ is symbolised by the cosmic divine conscious energy that is made active by doing Yoga and activating of the Kundalini, and ‘Shiva’ represents the awareness that comes with it of the presence of the pure consciousness called the Atma as one’s true ‘self’. This Atma is eternal, truthful, imperishable, immutable and non-dual; it is divine and sublime. When the aspirant becomes aware of it, he is filled with an extreme sense of spiritual achievement and the fulfillment of his desire for attaining a state of eternity and perpetual bliss. He would want nothing more; he has reached the pinnacle of spiritual attainment that is rare and difficult to achieve.] (85-86).

[Note—¹The three Granthis have been described in note to verse no. 67-68 of this Canto 1 above.

²The six Chakras are the subtle energy centers of the body. Briefly they are the following—(1) The ‘Mooladhar Chakra’ is located between genitals and anus in the area called the perineum. It is the site of the symbolic Shiva Lingam (Yogshikha Upanishad, Canto 1, verse no. 168) and the route through which the Apan wind finds its entrance in the Kundalini (Yogshikha Upanishad, Canto 2, verse no. 13). It is also here that the ascetic hears the Naad. It is said to be a symbol of Shakti or the dynamic powers of Shiva principle (Yogshikha Upanishad, Canto 2, verse no. 8, 11-12 and Canto 3, verse no. 2). (2) The ‘Swadhisthan Chakra’ is located in the region of the groins of males and the Bhug area of females. It has a 5-headed male phallus like a sprouting seed and its counterpart in the female is the clitoris. (3) The ‘Manipur Chakra’ is located in the navel area, is shaped like a gem and is surrounded by the network of Naadis (nerves) called solar plexus. It is also the site of the Sun energy. (4) The ‘Anahat Chakra’ is located in the chest between the heart and lung area and it is shaped like a swan looking downwards. It is also assumed to be like an 8-petal lotus facing down. It is also called the Hridaya Chakra because of its close proximity to the heart and close association with it as the Atma or pure consciousness resides in the subtle space of the heart. (5) The ‘Vishuddha Chakra/Kanth Chakra’ is located in the throat. To the left of it passes the Eda nerve representing the moon, to its right goes the Pingla nerve

representing the sun, and in the center is the Sushumna nerve through which the Kundalini energy rises up from the base of the spine to the skull. (6) The 'Agya Chakra or Bhru Chakra' is located between the eyebrows and root of the nose. It is also called the third eye of enlightenment and wisdom.

Besides these six, there are some other important Chakras, and they are the following—(7) The 'Brahm Randhra Chakra or Sahasraar Chakra' is located in the head and has the form of a grey cloud or smoke. It is the hair-like spilt in the top of the skull from where the vital wind called 'Pran' makes its exit from the body of a Yogi (ascetic) at the time of his death. (8) The 'Vyom Chakra' is symbolic of the sky and it is shaped like a 10-petal lotus located at the top of the head. (9) 'Bhug Chakra' is triangular in shape and represents the female genital organ. It is also called 'Kaam Roop Peeth']

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(D) Relationship of Chakras with Gyan (knowledge), Bhakti (devotion) and Yoga (meditation)--The thinking process of a man acts like a direction in which the headlamp of a car or the focus of a torch is turned towards, and the beam of light representing the energy flow of the different Chakras will consequentially be directed in that direction to the exclusion of all other directions. So, if the mind is assiduously fixed on a particular subject, the energy of the Kundalini (the chief Chakra) will be focused on it. If the subject is Brahma, the energy will be focused on Brahma; if the subject is the world, the energy will be diverted there. The focusing of the mind is like putting the reflector behind the bulb of the headlamp or torch, as it helps to concentrate the light of the bulb to a particular direction instead of allowing it to scatter and dissipate.

Gyan Yoga helps in long term focusing of attention on the higher aspects of existence— 'self' at the micro level and 'universe' at the macro level. This is why diligent perusal of Gyan (knowledge) raises a man from mundane existence to an enlightened existence where the noise and hustle of the world does not disturb him and he remains ever blissful, whereas the worldly man pursues this bliss and is not able to achieve it, and throws in the towel in frustration. Devotion (Bhakti) to God helps in this endeavour because it has a direct link with the heart, and a controlled heart acts like an assistant for the mind. So, Gyan, Bhakti and Yoga are not at odds with each other, they do not contradict and neutralise each other, but on the contrary they are the so-called three legs of the stool on which Brahma rests.

Taking a leaf from science, we can say that if we vibrate at a fine frequency, we become receptive to a finer quality of consciousness and its attendant elevation even as a shortwave radio transmission travels longer distances compared to the medium wave. Again, since energy resists its opposite force, e.g. the positive resists or neutralises the negative, the positive spiritual energy generated by the risen Kundalini helps to neutralise

the negative energy generated by such things as anger, joy, anguish, frustration, arrogance, passions, avarice, greed etc.

So we can say that the three aspects of spiritualism— Gyan (knowledge), Bahkti (devotion) and Yoga (meditation) are the three legs that hold aloft the flag of enlightened consciousness which has been unfurled by dedication, commitment and diligence. When a flag flutters in the wind atop a mast, it gives a feeling of accomplishment and pride to the people who ‘look up’ (and not down) at it as a symbol of their identity, dignity, achievement and self respect. They salute an unfurled and fluttering flag, and not a curled one. So, we salute enlightened, self-realised people, and not those in whom consciousness and divine energy are lying curled up in the form of the unfurled Kundalini. Since we have to make efforts to raise a flag on the mast before it starts fluttering, we have to make efforts to acquire Gyan, have Bhakti and do Meditation. But once the objective is achieved and success obtained, it reveals itself in an expression of ecstasy and exhilaration that comes with an accomplished task.

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‘The aim of art is to represent not the outward appearance of thing but their inward significance.’ —Aristotle

Truth is obtained by faith and conviction, which in turn is obtained by the grace of the Lord; grace is obtained by consecration, and the latter is obtained by sincere self-dedication. —Yajur Veda, 19/30.

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There are countless books based on Indian scriptures and their spiritual, metaphysical and theological principles written in English by Ajai Kumar Chhawchharia with a missionary zeal as his humble service to his beloved Lord Sri Ram.

These books are a 'book lover's dream come true' and stand out heads-over-shoulders in the realm of metaphysical, philosophical, devotional, spiritual and classical literature of India. Such as for example, there are Goswami Tulsidas' myriad works with Sri Ram as the central theme which are glittering like gems, poetically told, stupendous in beauty, marvelously narrated and contain a treasury of fathomless wisdom and deep insight into spiritualism, metaphysics

and philosophy. Then there is Veda Vyas' glorious narration of the epic story of Sri Ram in Adhyatma Ramayan and Devi Puran Maha Bhagwat Ramayan. The Upanishads represent the epitome of Indian philosophical, metaphysical and spiritual treatises—the marvellous highest pinnacle that human thought can possibly reach. They are acclaimed the world over as highly evolved and intellectually enlightening books. The Vedas, on the other hand, are believed to be revealed books. The two form the two legs of Hinduism.

The author has presented a simple, day to day bilingual version (Hindi and English) of these stupendous texts. A huge array of information on Sri Ram and Hanuman culled from the Vedas, Upanishads, Purans, and myriad other sources have been systematically presented by the author in lucid, florid, easy flowing, vibrant and captivating English language—useful to a layman, a devotee, curious people, research scholars, casual as well as serious readers, plain book lovers or connoisseurs of classical literature. A must read for everyone.

All the books have original text with line-to-line easy flowing English version with necessary explanatory notes, appendices, etc.

The list of books are as follows:

Detailed English versions with commentary on Books of 'Goswami Tulsidas':

- * Vairagya Sandipani of Goswami Tulsidas.
- * Vinai Patrika of Goswami Tulsidas.
- * Geetawali of Goswami Tulsidas.
- * Kavitaawali of Goswami Tulsidas.
- * Dohawali of Goswami Tulsidas.
- * Janki Mangal of Goswami Tulsidas.
- * Ram Lala Nahachu of Goswami Tulsidas
- * Parvati Mangal of Goswami Tulsidas.
- * Barvai Ramayan of Goswami Tulsidas.
- * Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand (Canto 1) [The other 6 Cantos, i.e. Ayodhya Kand, Aranya Kand, Kishkindha Kand, Sundar Kand, Lanka Kand, and Uttar Kand, are in the process of writing, and would be made available, one by one, as soon as they are ready for publication.]

Detailed English Books based on original texts of Goswami Tulsidas, with extensive commentary:

- * Story of Ravana and the Epic War of Lanka Told in Slow Motion: in 2 Volumes (5Parts)
- * 'Sundar Kand' of Ram Charit Manas
- * The Kaagbhusund Ramayan or The Aadi Ramayan
- * The Divine Story of Lord Shiva's marriage with Parvati (based on Ram Charit Manas, Parvati Mangal & Vinai Patrika)
- * Lord Ram's marriage with Sita (based on Ram Charit Manas).

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- * Ram Geeta: The Gospel of Lord Ram.
 - * A Divine Biography of Lord Ram & Glory of Lord's Holy Name.

Other Books on the theme of Lord Ram:

- * Glory of Lord Ram's Holy Name, Sacred Mantras, Stotras & Hymns
- * Anthology of Sacred Hymns, Stotras & Mantras of Lord Ram.
- * Upanishads dedicated to Lord Ram & their Philosophy.
- * Saint Surdas' "Ram Charitawali".
- * The Chariot of God—Dharma Rath.
- * Bhakti—Devotion for Lord God.
- * Saints and Non-Saints, Their Character and Comparison.
- * 'Ram Charit Manas' (the holy lake containing the ambrosia in the form of the divine story describing the deeds and acts of Lord Ram who was an incarnation of the Supreme Being upon earth) by Goswami Tulsidas—full text with English introduction.
- * Life sketch of Goswami Tulsidas.

The Trilogy of Books on the epic known as the 'Ramayan':

- * English rendering of Adbhut Ramayan by sage Valmiki.
- * English rendering of Adhyatma Ramayan by sage Veda Vyas.
- * English rendering of Devi Puran's Ramayan by sage Veda Vyas.

English Books dedicated to Lord Shiva:

- * Book 1= Marriage of Lord Shiva with Parvati
- * Book 2= Sacred Hymns of Lord Shiva.
- * Book 3= Lord Shiva—His legend, Upanishads, Puran, Hymns & Parvati Mangal.

A Book in English dedicated to Lord Hanuman:

- * The Legendary Glory of Hanuman.

English Books explaining various spiritual and metaphysical concepts based on the Upanishads:

- * Chakras and Naadis in the human body.
- * Metaphysical & Spiritual Concepts of the Upanishads Explained
- * Concepts of Mantra, Japa, Tantra and Yantra According to the Upanishads
- * A True Guru (The Qualities, Importance and Need of a True Teacher, Preceptor, Guide and Advisor).
- * Maya: The Whirlpool of Delusions in Creation.
- * The Triumvirate of Creation: According to the Upanishads.
- * The 'Pentagon of Creation'—The Panch Tattvas, Panch Bhuts, Panch Prans & Panch Koshas.
- * Revelation of Creation as envisioned in the Upanishads.

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- * YOGA—Its Practice & Philosophy according to the Upanishads.
 - * Who is a Guru?
 - * The 24 Avtaars (incarnations) of Lord Vishnu.
 - * The Viraat Purush—the cosmic, all-embracing form of the Supreme Being: as conceived in the Upanishads, Adhyatma Ramayan of Veda Vyasa, and Ram Charit Manas of Goswami Tulsidas.
 - * OM and NAAD: the cosmic revelation of Super Consciousness extensively explained and compiled from the Upanishads.
 - * Vaak (spoken word), Akshar (alphabet) & Sristi (creation).
 - * The concept of ‘Kalaa’.
 - * ‘Brahm’ in the eyes of the Upanishads.
 - * ‘Sanyas’ with ‘Vairagya Shatkam’ of Bhartiari.
 - * The ‘Mahavakyas’ (Great Sayings) of the Upanishads.
 - * The ‘Tattwas’ (elements) and the Gunas (qualities) According to the Upanishads.
 - * The Fundamental Elements and Character Traits of Creation as Enunciated in the Upanishads { available only on www.draft2digital.com }
 - * The Metaphor of the Hansa in the Upanishads: The symbolism of a Grand Swan used to explain the wisdom of spiritual and metaphysical principles by the Upanishads.

Other English Books on Hinduism and its Spiritual Philosophy (by Ajai kumar Chhawchharia):

- * Bhakti Sutra Mala
- * Shandilya Bhakti Sutra
- * Narad Bhakti Sutra
- * ‘Vairagya Shatkam’ of king-sage Bhartiari.
- * The great ancient sages, seers, saints and enlightened kings of India.
- * The great sages, seers, saints and enlightened kings of ancient India { available only on www.draft2digital.com }
- * ‘Arunachal Pancharatna & Rudra Ashtak’. { In English, co-produced by Rev. Janardan Kalianand-Swami of USA and Ajai Kumar Chhawchharia. }

***Detailed English renderings, with explanatory notes and commentaries of the 108 Upanishads classified according to the Vedic tradition.**

Vol. 1=Rig Veda Upanishads; Vol. 2= Sam Veda Upanishads; Vol. 3= Shukla Yajur Veda Upanishads; Vol. 4= Krishna Yajur Veda Upanishads; Vol. 5= Atharva Veda Upanishads;

NOTE: A full-blown English rendering of Tulsidas' epic 'Ram Charit Manas' is under preparation. It will be a unique Book and an elaborate one, as it would run into many thousands of pages that would endeavour to explain each single verse of Ram Charit Manas in detail from different perspectives, with the aid of explanatory notes and references.

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DEDICATION

THIS BOOK IS DEDICATED TO MY BELOVED LORD RAM

I dedicate this Book to Lord Sri Ram who is my dearest of dear, most beloved, the essence of my life and being, and for whom, and for whose pleasure, and on whose behest, and on whose divine mission, this book is dedicated.

Nothing that I write is of my own creation. It is the Lord who is getting it done. So I deserve no credit. However, being an ordinary man like the rest of us, I may have committed errors, and for those I beg forgiveness. I hope this book will help to continue the great tradition of singing the glories of the different aspects of same indivisible one Divinity in order to meet diverse needs of the Soul, the Spirit, one such being to find peace and happiness amidst the surrounding turmoil of the world by being able to spend some time in the thoughts of the Divine Being, the same 'Parmatma', the same Lord known by different names in different tongues.

I submit this effort at the holy feet of my beloved Lord Ram, and surely also to Lord Hanuman who was very dear to the Lord and an incarnation of Lord Shiva himself, with this humble little prayer that comes to my lips: 'Lord God; Glorious and Blessed be Thy Name. I yield Thee my most hearty thanks and reverential gratitude that Thou hast given me the honour and the privilege and the opportunity to serve Thee and fulfil Thy desire to spread Thine Good Word for the good and welfare of the human kind through the Books Thou hast got written through these humble hands of mine. And for that mercy and graciousness of Thee, I shall ever and for ever remain Thine grateful and thankful and obliged.'

I hope the reader will find my book useful and interesting. Since English is an international language, this book will help the English speaking world to access this masterpiece of classical Indian scriptural text.

"He leadeth me! O blessed tho't!
O words with heav'nly comfort fraught!
What-e'er I do, wher-e'er I be,
Still 'tis God's hand that leadeth me!" [A Hymn by: Joseph Henry Gilmore in 1862.]

Ajai Kumar Chhawchharia
Author

Chakras/subtle energy centers in the body

(Based on Saubhagya Laxmi Upanishad of Rig Veda, Canto 3)

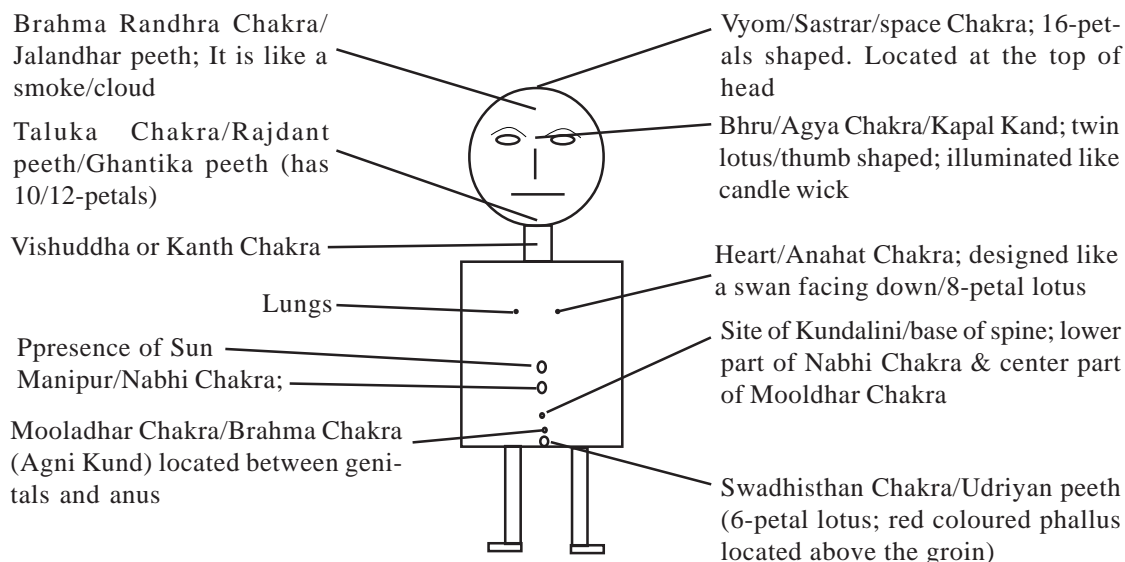


Fig (1)

Naadis: Nerves in the body

(Based on Jabal Darshan Upanishad of Sam Veda, Canto 4, verse 13-17)

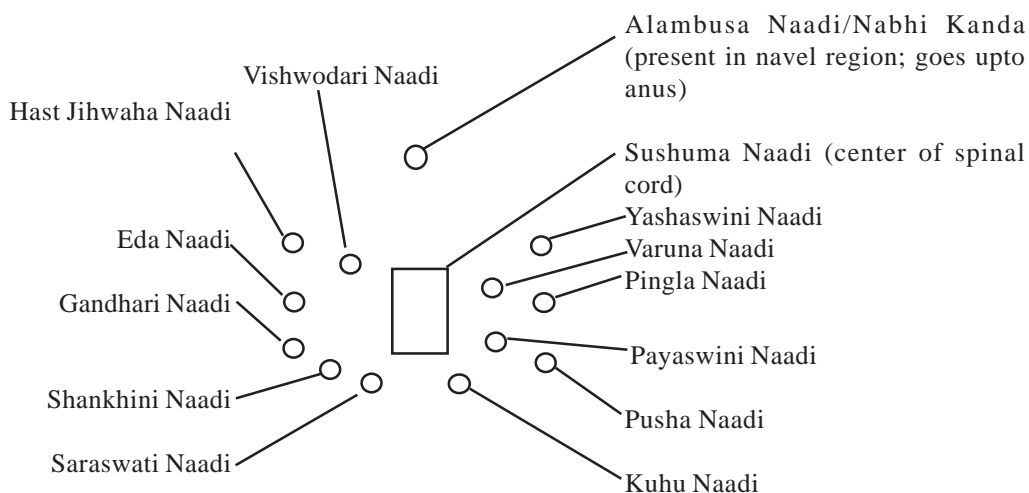


Fig (2)

(T.S. of Spinal Cord Region at the lower end)

